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ABSTRACT

A reading program was developed to motivate 20 second grade children identified as capable, confident readers but who would not read on their own. An interest inventory, a free response interview, and direct observation revealed that the students were in literate school and home environments, but few chose to read independently. A 10-week structured sustained silent reading program was implemented to provide the time, the setting, and the activity to foster independent reading habits in the children. Guidelines were developed for the program to ensure an effective and efficient management system. Motivational strategies were utilized to maintain high interest. The instructor read with the children to assure an exemplary role model, and parents were involved to encourage a good home reading environment. The practicum produced positive results. The children developed long attention spans with print during daily sustained silent reading sessions as measured by direct observation. They exhibited positive reading attitudes and behaviors while engaging in sustained silent reading sessions and related activities as measured by direct observation, a free response interview, an attitude scale, and a parent survey. The collected data supported a relationship between sustained silent reading and the development of positive reading habits. (Author/HTH)

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A SUSTAINED SILENT READING PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR SECOND GRADE TO FOSTER A POSITIVE READING ATTITUDE AND DEVELOP THE READING HABIT

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PRACTICUM 1 SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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CLUSTER XI

December, 1983

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Abstract

A Sustained Silent Reading Program Designed for Second Grade to Foster a Positive Reading Attitude and Develop the Reading Habit- Practicum I Report
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The fostering of positive attitudes toward reading and the developing of the reading habit are recognized concerns of today's educators.

This practicum provided the necessary reading practice to 20 second grade children indentified as capable, confident readers who were not choosing to read on their own. An interest inventory, a free response interview, and direct observation revealed a literate school and home environment with few children reading independently. The children needed help to become "readers"--readers who would not only be able to sustain themselves in print, but who would also want to read for knowledge and pleasure.

The chosen solution was to implement a ten-week structured sustained silent reading program which would provide the time, the setting, and the activity to foster the reading habit--a time for all children to have a daily opportunity to read independently from something of their own choosing.

Guidelines were provided to insure an effective and efficient management system. Motivational strategies were utilized to keep interest high. The second-grade teacher read with the children to assure an exemplary role model. The parents were involved to encourage a good home reading environment.

The practicum produced positive results. The children developed staying power with print during daily sustained silent reading sessions as measured by direct observation. The children exhibited positive reading attitudes/behaviors while engaging in sustained silent reading sessions and related activities as measured by direct observation, a free response interview, an attitude scale, and a parent survey.

The collected data supported a relationship between sustained silent reading and the development of the reading habit.

Descriptors: Free Reading; Independent Reading; Primary Education; Reading Attitudes; Reading Habits; Reading Interests; Reading Programs; Recreational Reading; Sustained Silent Reading.

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Chapter One

The Introduction

A. Educator's Role, Responsibilities, and the Work Setting

At the time of the practicum, this educator was a second-grade teacher at the Bern Elementary School responsible for 20 children grouped heterogeneously in a self-contained classroom. This educator's major responsibility was to help each child acquire the basic academic skills to the best of the educator's ability. Through the implementation of multi-varied strategies and activities, this educator was expected to bring the state-mandated curriculum to the assigned students. Another responsibility of this educator was to maintain good lines of communication not only with the children and the parents, but also with administrators, colleagues, and other residents of the community. In addition, this educator was expected to participate in curriculum change.

This educator was employed by the Schuylkill Valley School District for a period of ten years: (1) five years as the district-wide early childhood curriculum supervisor, preschool through grade three; (2) two years as an intermediate reading-language arts teacher; and (3) three years as a second-grade teacher. The major thrust of the supervisory position was coordination of curriculum, kindergarten orientation, and community outreach. This educator was, in fact, a resource person, a preschool developmental screening examiner, a workshop leader, a parenting group facilitator, and a liaison person between the teachers and the children, parents, principals, guidance counselor, and school

nurse regarding individual children and the learning program. Because of a budgetary cut, the supervisory position was terminated and this educator returned to classroom teaching.

In the work setting, this educator continued to serve as a facilitator for parenting courses and an advisor for the early childhood program in addition to the classroom responsibilities. Outside the work setting, this educator was (1) an adjunct faculty member in the continuing education department of The Pennsylvania State University, Berks Campus, (2) an instructor of teacher education courses for the Berks, Lehigh, and Schuylkill Counties' Intermediate Units of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and (3) a free lance speaker/workshop leader at the local, state, and national levels.

The Bern Elementary School was one of three elementary schools in the Schuylkill Valley School District located on ten acres of a rural setting. The school housed a kindergarten, six primary classrooms, four intermediate classrooms, a library, a gym, an auditorium, a cafeteria, a health complex, and an office complex. In addition, a primary gifted classroom and a remedial reading laboratory were maintained for special needs children. The intermediate-age gifted children and other special needs children were served at nearby schools. The school population was 267 children (Wallace, Note 1). Because of declining enrollment, the classrooms of each grade had been reduced from three to two in 1982. The majority of the children were transported by bus. Few minority/low income families' children attended the school. Less than 20 children were on free or reduced lunch.

Because there were no supervisory curriculum positions in the school district, the supervision of the teachers and support staff was the responsibility of the building principals. The principal of the Bern Elementary School supervised: (1) eleven full-time teachers; (2) six part-time teachers, music, art, physical education, reading, gifted, and speech; (3) a part-time guidance counselor; and (4) a part-time nurse.

The principal was responsible for the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning. Because the school district had no other supervisory personnel, the continual evaluation of instruction and updating of curriculum were major supervisory duties of the principal. The teachers were involved in curriculum evaluation and change by either serving on various curriculum committees or giving input to committee members. The actual implementation of curriculum was performed by the classroom teachers who brought curriculum to the children.

The parents of the community were actively involved in the school's educational program. Volunteer aides served in the library and in the individual classrooms on a regular weekly basis. The PTA sponsored many school activities and purchased educational supplies and materials for classroom use.

A quality educational program and highly motivated teachers, who kept abreast with current trends and innovations in education, were expected by the involved school-home persons in the community. The year prior to the practicum, the school district published the results of a community-home-school involvement project in the form of a long-range

educational plan. Members of the community and the school served on many specific committees, evaluated the total education program and made suggested recommendations. A task force committee of community and school persons, of which this educator was a member, worked together to prioritize the recommendations for curriculum change.

B. Description of the Community

The township of Bern was described a traditional Pennsylvania German farm area of picturesque rolling hills located eight miles north of the city of Reading in northeastern Pennsylvania. As in most Berks County rural farm communities, much of the acreage was, in part, residential with only a small percentage of the workers employed on farms. The greater percentage of the working force was composed of craftsmen, laborers, and clerical workers.

Greenfields, a small town within the confines of Bern Township, bordered the city of Reading. It was described a typical suburban, middle-to-upper class, white collar community with single family homes valued from $25,000 to $250,000 (O'Connell, Note 2). The greater percentage of the working force was composed of professional and technical workers.

The community was easily accessible by roadway and air. Bus service existed on a limited basis. A major highway provided rapid access to the city of Reading, other parts of Berks County, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The Reading Municipal Airport was located in the township. The airport was ten minutes driving from downtown Reading and was served by two airlines. The airport scheduled daily flights to

Newark, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It also provided chartered freight and passenger service.

Within the confines of the community were many fine recreational facilities including parks, swimming pools, theaters, golf courses, and a ski area. Along the Schuylkill River were jogging and bicycle trails as well as provisions for swimming, fishing, boating, and picnicking. The Blue Marsh Lake, a flood control facility, also served the community as a fine recreational site. In addition, two private country clubs served some of the residents.

The cultural, social, religious, and educational activities were closely interrelated in the community. Local churches, civic organizations and the school district sponsored varied activities. Many residents of the area were affiliated with these community and school organizations.

The Bern Township-Greenfields area maintained the uniqueness of a historic, friendly, quiet, nice-place-to-live community with a low incidence of crime and unemployment. The 1980 Census (Note 2) showed a population of 5,097 persons and a count of 1,530 homes within an area of 12,740 acres. Few minority and/or low-income families lived in the community. As in many communities in the county, population and housing had increased and school enrollment had declined. In the ten-year period from 1970 to 1980, the 1980 Census revealed an increase in population of 8.3%, an increase in housing of 22.6%, and a decline in school enrollment of 18%. Projected enrollments had shown a continual drop in school population though 1988 for the entire school district.

This same projection had shown a marked increase in school population through 1988 for kindergarten and primary grades.

Chapter Two

The Study of the Problem

A. Description of the Problem Situation

If there was a single best process for improving reading, fostering a positive reading attitude, and developing the reading habit, it would be "reading." It was no secret that children who read on their own were the good readers--"effective, efficient, and versatile" (Botel, 1981, p.7) readers. The attainment of a good attitude toward reading and the opportunity to read on their own was of paramount importance if the children were to become "readers." Yet, with the expansion and specialization of current curriculum, it became increasingly difficult for this educator to find time for the practice of independent sustained silent reading as a means to establish the lifetime habit of reading for knowledge and pleasure. Caught up in the everyday demands of the classroom, it was easy to forget to work free independent reading into the daily classroom schedule.

The children of the Bern Elementary School arrived in second grade from a first grade reading program that was heavy in language experience and phonics (beginning sounds) and weak in comprehension skills. Few children were reading on grade level. As a result, there was a need for a concentrated skill development program. With much of the current emphasis on the instruction of basic reading skills, this educator was

often dismayed with the results of the total reading program. The conscientious efforts of this educator were not tapping the full reading potential of the children. After five months in second grade, the children had become capable readers. They came to see themselves as "good" readers; yet, they were spending little time reading on their own. It was evident that children who mastered basic reading skills might not necessarily become lifelong readers. McCracken's (1969) observation highlighted this dilemma: "Is literacy enough? Or do we want to develop literate students who read willingly and use reading as a part of their lives?" (p.446)

The development of the reading habit required adequate practice. In the desire to teach children to read, educators might be guilty of overlooking the importance of practice in independent silent reading (Allington, 1977; Botel, 1981; Gambrell, 1978). This educator readily agreed that such independent reading practice was beneficial for children; yet, this practice, except for periodic whole group "quiet-time" reading (Hunt, 1971) and small group "booktime" reading (Hong, 1981), was relegated to reading a selection from the basal reader, the weekly library periods, or the home setting. The children who did find time to practice reading independently in the school setting were usually those children who finished their work and chose to read as a free choice activity. There was a need to supplement this educator's basal reader-language experience skill development approach, which had already proved its inadequacies in producing avid independent readers. The problem was not basic skill instruction; it was the need to give

equal weight to independent reading practice in the reading program.

Reading practice gained attention as an important component in a school's reading program. An attempt to provide this independent reading practice reached the classroom in a procedure known as sustained silent reading (SSR). Introduced as an integral part of an individualized reading program by Hunt (1971), and advocated as a component of all reading programs by McCracken (1971), SSR involved children and teachers in periods of silent reading using independently chosen materials. When used as a component of the reading program, SSR proponents alleged that educators had the means to couple their efforts in skill instruction with a strategy that promoted children's willingness to read (Allington, 1977; Botel, 1981; Coughlin, 1977; McCracken, 1971; Mork, 1972).

The children needed to "catch" the reading habit. The children needed a program that focused on getting them to read and continue to read until, hopefully, it became a habit. Allington (1977) claimed that children did not automatically learn to read silently on their own for long periods of time without help. A daily sustained silent reading program would focus on reading, reading, and more reading until it became a habit.

At the current time, a sustained silent reading program was not included as a component of the reading-communication arts curriculum in the primary grades of the Schuylkill Valley School District. With daily instructional time at a premium, a closer examination of the daily practice of sustained silent reading was certainly warranted. The

easily-initiated, time-efficient program held promise of being the answer to this educator's problem--time to help the children "catch" the reading habit. Bill Martin, Jr. (Note 3) called sustained silent reading "pure gold."

The problem the practicum addressed was: INSUFFICIENT SUSTAINED SILENT READING TIME AS A MEANS OF FOSTERING A POSITIVE READING ATTITUDE AND DEVELOPING THE HABIT OF READING INDEPENDENTLY FOR KNOWLEDGE AND PLEASURE.

B. Evidence of the Problem

Every educator should nurture the reading habit. If this educator was to help children in their quest to become lifetime readers, it was important to find out: (1) where they were in reading; (2) what they thought about reading; and (3) if, in fact, they were "readers." Although it was undoubtedly important to look at the individual-group standardized reading scores, this educator believed the informal assessment revealed a truer picture of the children's reading abilities and behaviors. And, although it was true the children needed a measure of competence to be able to read, how they thought about reading and how much they read would make them "readers."

In examining the achievement test results (Wallace, Note 4) and discovering the first grade class composite reading score to be below grade level, this educator proceeded to evaluate individual reading scores to ascertain problem areas. In lieu of this evaluation, and after administration of intensive informal screening devices that measured the same skills, this educator was not surprised to find an

instructional reading level breakdown as listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Instructional Reading Levels of Second Grade Children

September, 1982

Level	Number of Children	Percentage
Advanced	2	10
Second Reader	4	20
First Reader	6	30
Primer	5	25
Preprimer	3	15

September, 1982

Table 1 revealed that 14 members of the class were reading below grade level, four members of the class were reading on grade level, and two members of the class were reading above grade level. The results of this screening inventory were not unexpected by this educator. Each year, the majority of children arrived in second grade below grade level in instructional reading. The need to make a concentrated effort toward increased reading skill development was not only obvious to this educator, but was also an administrative directive. Much time went into skill development lessons to upgrade reading level in an effort to help the children feel comfortable with print.

Of paramount importance in becoming a "reader" was: (1) how the children thought about reading and (2) how much time, if any, the

children were reading on their own. To assess the children's reading attitudes/behaviors, this educator analyzed particular answers on an Interest Inventory (Burkhart, Note 5; Appendix A) and a Free Response Interview (Note 6; Appendix B). Pertinent information regarding the children's reading interests, attitudes, and behaviors as reported to this educator on the interest inventory was noted on Table 2.

Table 2

Interest Inventory Results Related to Reading of 20 Second Grade Children

Inventory Item Number	Behavior	Children Reporting	Percentage Reporting
2	Parents Read to Child	9	45
3	Child Reads to Parents	6	30
4	Read on Own (Summer)	6	30
5	Have Books at Home	20	100
6	Have Magazines at Home	16	80
7	Have Encyclopedia at Home	16	80
8	Go to Public Library	5	25
9	Name a Favorite Book	7	35
15, 18	Mention Reading as Favorite Thing or Like to Do at Home	3	15
23	Reading Liked Most at School	3	15
23	Reading Liked Least at School	1	5

Table 2 revealed a literate home environment with few children reading. Most of the children reported "a lot" when answering the query concerning their personal book collection. Many of the children who gave a negative response to items two and three, regarding being read to by parents or reading to parents, commented "when I was little." Of those children who said they read in the summer: three children commented "a lot" and three children commented "sometimes." The three children who mentioned liking reading most at school were the same three children who said they read a lot on their own. The results clearly indicated that reading was not important to most of the children. It was not something they did on their own. Why? The findings of the free response interview corroborated the results of the interest inventory. Most of the children did not fully understand the act of reading and few were enjoying reading. The majority of the chidren did not see themselves as "readers" outside of reading group. In fact, many of the children commented that reading was "the reading group." And, too, many of the children believed they needed to "get better" before they could read a book. In response to "Why do people read?" the majority of the comments were similar to the following:

to learn to read

so you aren't dumb

so you can do stuff better

if you don't read, you don't know the words to spell

so you can read books with harder words

so that people can read signs

so you can read what other people write to you

to get a job

The responses "because I want to learn" and "I read for fun" were rare. The response "learn more words so you can get better and be in a higher group" supported the "reading is a reading group" theory. In fact, 17 of the children answered "in reading group" in response to the question "When do you read?" And, 13 of the children gave the following type of comments for being a "poor" reader:

reading is too hard

I'm behind in my group

I make mistakes in the workbook

I'm in the low group

The good readers reported:

I get good grades and I know big words

I know because I'm in the top group

I get the answers right

I'm reading the Secrets books and that's ahead

I know what I read

Again, the children viewed reading as "the reading group." And, when asked "What do you read?" most of the children answered, "the reading book" or "the workbook." As for reading silently? Most of the children told this educator "I can't do it too good." However, some of the children reported they didn't like to read out loud because "I make too many mistakes." As for fun? Most of the children thought it would be

fun "when I get better." The beginning of the year reading assessment revealed that the majority of the second grade children lacked competence and confidence. Making mistakes appeared to be the criterion for not making it as a "reader."

The parents were noticing the same behaviors as this educator. They questioned their children's reading level, attitude, and reading habits. They expressed dismay that their children were not reading on grade level and frustration that their children were not reading at home. They cited the problem of time for reading and the conflict of so many outside activities. These parents looked to the classroom as the place for reading time.

The librarian, too, reported evidence of the problem the practicum addressed. In weekly library sessions, the children engaged in a free reading session monitored by the librarian. The librarian expressed concern with the great number of children who were unable to sustain themselves with print over a period of time and/or were unable to find a readable book. This educator's concern was the number of children returning from the library empty handed. Comments were: "I forgot to bring my books back," "I couldn't find a book I liked," "I don't want to take any books home," and "I have enough books at home." On one given day, seven of the children came back to the classroom without a book as opposed to a number of children returning with four or more books.

To the parents' query, "Shouldn't our children be reading on their own?" and to the librarian's query, "Shouldn't second grade children be able to select a book and sustain themselves in print?" this educator

realized the need to help the children become "readers"--readers who would not only be able to sustain themselves in print, but who would also want to read for knowledge and pleasure. To read on their own, the children needed to: (1) see themselves as competent and confident readers, (2) want to read, (3) sustain themselves in print, and (4) enjoy reading. In a five-month period, this educator, through motivational strategies and modeling, worked on skills and attitudes in the belief the children would come to see themselves as readers and would choose to read independently outside of the reading group. In January, the instructional reading levels looked quite different as reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Instructional Reading Levels of Second Grade Children

January, 1983

Level	Number of Children	Percentage
Advanced	6	30
Second Reader	11	55
First Reader	3	15

The Student Five Response Interview (Appendix B) was again repeated. The results of the interview and the ongoing classroom observation were gratifying. All the children saw themselves as good

readers as opposed to seven children in September. That said something for competence and confidence. One of the children commented, "I know I'm good because you smile when I read." Saying words, doing workbook pages, and going to reading group were no longer the common responses. All the children said they liked to read; yet, many children were still not reading on their own. At the second parent-teacher conferences, the parents were again expressing concern with the fact that their children were not reading on their own at home. The children were reading more independently as a result of this educator's periodic teacher-directed independent reading time sessions as well as the opportunity to read on their own as a self-selected activity. In direct observation, it was noted that those children choosing to read as a self-selected activity, when given the opportunity to work at various learning centers, accounted for four to six children daily. The remaining 14 children were not choosing to read independently in the classroom. Except in: (1) periodic teacher-directed independent reading sessions, (2) weekly librarian-monitored free reading sessions, and (3) parent-directed independent reading sessions at home, daily silent reading practice was relegated to a few and those few were the better readers.

The evidence indicated a need to provide independent silent reading time for all children. With all the children seeing themselves as "good readers," this educator believed the time had come for a daily sustained silent reading time to maintain the positive reading attitude and promote the reading habit.

This educator thought it was appropriate at this time to go beyond

the children and the classroom to provide information of the workings at the state and local levels that indicated evidences of the need to do something about the problem of providing time for independent self-selected reading.

In the working document, Pennsylvania's Reading-Communication Arts Plan (PRCP), Botel (1981) emphasized the need of having students read on their own as a way of "becoming more effective, efficient, and versatile readers and a way of encouraging a lifetime commitment to reading as a means to knowledge and entertainment" (p.7). The Pennsylvania Department of Education was encouraging all school districts to include sustained silent reading time at all grade levels in the long-range plan to upgrade curriculum. Interestingly, the results of the school-wide Long Range Planning Report (Schuylkill Valley, Note 7) made the following recommendations for curriculum improvement in the district's reading program: "silent reading periods will be provided daily for development of individual reading skills and reading habit, K-12."

In 1982, Pennsylvania Department of Education assessment surveys (Botel, 1982), designed as a vehicle for individual teachers to examine and reflect upon their own curriculum design and instructional strategies as well as for schools engaged in long-range planning for school improvement, were administered to the local staff. Analysis of the completed survey in sustained silent reading, yielded to this educator and colleagues the need to provide more time for independent reading. Indeed, the state and the district recommended what the staff had been

able to discover through self-examination of the current reading-communication arts program.

C. Analysis of the Problem

When planning a reading curriculum, educators are in concordance with the principle goals of promoting positive student attitudes and developing the reading habit. Yet, these goals are often lost in the current trends emphasizing skill instruction and diagnostic/prescriptive teaching. Five years ago, the Schuylkill Valley School District embarked on a large-scale reading skills improvement project. Under the leadership of the district's reading supervisor, a federally funded, diagnostic/prescriptive reading skills improvement program was implemented. For three years, the reading skills of individual children were diagnosed through pre and posttesting, involving extensive record keeping. Skills were taught and retaught until 80% mastery was achieved. Because of the loss of funds and the burden of extensive testing and record keeping, the program was deleted from the curriculum. As a result of this program, the basal reader skill-development program became "the reading program" in most classrooms.

Prior to the above-mentioned skills improvement program, the primary staff received in-service training, by this educator, to implement a dual basal reader-language experience program. The program was off to a good start only to be hindered by the skills program, which received top priority for three years. In the first grade, the language experience aspect of the program became a program of the teacher reading a story and the children engaging in a related activity. Consequently,

the first grade children were receiving an extensive lengthy readiness program of: (1) responding to literature, and (2) learning letter sounds and words. There was little actual reading in or out of reading group. It was this educator's belief that the first grade children should be introduced to print/books earlier and the teachers should devote more time to the art of reading and less time on phonics instruction and word recognition. Perhaps then, the children, upon entering second grade, would see themselves as reading for knowledge and enjoyment instead of participating in a reading group to see if they knew all the words and received a "star and happy face" on the workbook page. The survey results showed the children equating their ability to read by the number of words missed when reading aloud and the number of mistakes made on a workbook page. The goal in reading appeared to be one of becoming a better reader so they wouldn't make mistakes. The "reading-is-work mentality" that children associate with books was supported in the findings of Allington (1977). It was not surprising that 13 of the children viewed themselves as poor readers because they made mistakes in books and workbooks. This educator was not suggesting the abandonment of teaching reading skills, but was suggesting equal weight be given to independent reading time. In so doing, perhaps more of the children would have read over the summer vacation. As indicated on the inventory, the children had an abundance of books in their homes, but few children picked up a book to read. It was this educator's opinion that the children were seeing books as something done to them. Although the teacher and parents were reading to children, the children

did not view themselves as "readers."

Why weren't most of the children reading on their own? It would have been simplistic to answer, "Some children can't read." It would have been just as simplistic to answer, "Some children don't want to read." In concentrating on teaching children how to read, have educators forgotten to teach children to want to read? Fader (1969) claimed he never met a child who didn't want to read. Yet Wilmot (1975) claimed many children who knew how to read chose not to read. Trelease (1982) spoke of "desire as the magic ingredient" needed to make children readers and he believed that desire needed to be "planted by parents and teachers who work at it" (p.24). The children needed to be convinced that reading was not only associated with ditto sheets, workbooks, and tests, but it was also an important activity worthy of doing. Allington (1977) stated that children did not learn to read silently for a sustained period of time on their own. They needed help. Hunt (1971) emphasized the importance of making the silent reader first and then the oral reader.

In the first grade at the Bern School, silent reading was largely ignored, both in reading group or as a recreational activity. The teachers claimed the children did not have enough facility to read silently. Yet, when these children came to second grade and were asked by this educator if they liked to read aloud, 13 gave a negative answer. It was this educator's belief that these children did not want their mistakes known. Making mistakes while reading aloud was not an incentive to read. Have educators shortchanged children by emphasizing

the mechanics to the extent that desire to read was not promoted? This educator saw the need for a commitment--not to a particular method or program, but to the children. The goal should not be one of helping children know how to read without a complementary goal of helping children become "readers."

In this educator's focus on facilitating reading, it became necessary to help the children see reading as a daily lifetime activity in the pursuit of knowledge and enjoyment instead of an isolated reading-group activity. Chall (1967) supported the teacher as a "continuing influence" in facilitating reading. She saw the teacher as the best reading method--"you are the reading experience" (p.9). In an effort to be the reading experience, this educator used motivational and modeling strategies as a means to an end. What was happening? The children knew this educator loved books and loved to read. The children knew this educator was pleased when they selected something to read and read it on their own. The children knew this educator was happy when they brought a book from home to share. The children knew they could make mistakes because this educator proved to them "mistakes were for learning." The children knew they could practice reading silently without knowing all the words. In addition, all the children in this educator's class participated in specific periodic independent reading activities, both in the classroom and at the library. All the children could read. Most of the children liked to read. And even though some of the children were still having some difficulty with print, the results of the second Free Response Interview (Appendix B) and direct

observation clearly indicated that the children viewed themselves as "readers." They all called themselves "good readers." This was in direct contrast to the 13 children who labeled themselves "poor readers" in September. Yet, although the children were reading more in materials this educator selected for them to read, not many children were choosing to read on their own, within or outside of the school setting, as observed by or reported to this educator. Why were these children not reading more on their own? It appeared that motivational and modeling strategies without a daily sustained silent reading program did not seem to be enough to nurture the reading habit that would cause more of the children to read on their own.

Reading aloud to children had always been a pleasurable experience. If parents and teachers alike read aloud to children, wouldn't children catch the reading habit? Why didn't more of these children read on their own for enjoyment? Both the first-grade teachers and this educator read aloud to the children each day. It was this educator's belief that the children needed to hear daily something well read that had been well written. Martin (Note 3) claimed it was through the daily exposure to the "life-lifting language of literature" that children "found their own worthwhileness." Many reading authorities (McCracken, 1971; Gambrel, 1981; Martin, Note 3; Rosecky, Note 8) stressed the need of reading models. Wasn't this reading aloud good modeling for reading? Wouldn't the reading habit be caught? The children saw the teacher or parent enjoying reading; but, as reported earlier, they also saw reading as something done to them. The children needed to be exposed to

pleasurable reading experiences other than read-aloud time. All read-aloud motivation would go for naught if time wasn't made available to put reading by children into practice.

Children needed large amounts of practice using the skill of silent reading (Mork, 1972). Many educators paid lip service to the goal of helping children become successful independent readers, but there were few attempts to provide a structured independent silent reading activity time to help children develop the reading habit.

What children were practicing reading on their own? And when were they practicing? Many teachers relied on expecting children to read at home as their reading practice. Mork (1972) said teachers cannot relegate reading practice to an at-home activity because too few children read independently on a daily basis in their homes. At conference time, many parents reported that reading at home competed with many rival claims on their children's free time out of school. They found it difficult for their children to find time for reading. Wilmot (1975) stated that many children who read on their own were often the better readers. Parents of the good readers reported their children were independent at-home readers, but only two of those children read on a daily basis (Burkhart, Note 9).

In an effort to give children time for practice, this educator initiated (1) weekly whole-group "quiet-time" reading activities with this educator also reading silently, (2) weekly small-group "booktime" (Hong, 1981) with this educator offering guidance, and (3) daily opportunities to read silently in reading group. As the children gained

competence and confidence, reading became easier and more enjoyable, but who was choosing to read on their own? Some of the better readers found time to read on their own. Were these children finding time to read because they were able to finish their assigned work before the allotted time; thus, having the opportunity to choose something to read independently? This educator had to answer in the affirmative. This educator was observing an increase in the number of children choosing to read on their own as they finished their assigned work. This educator asked the following question: If those children not reading on their own in the classroom were to finish their assigned work before the alloted time, might some of those children choose to read on their own? This educator had to admit to that probable possibiity.

D. Related Literature

The literature reviewed in this chapter examined the effects of sustained silent reading programs on student reading achievement, attitude, and habit. Although reading achievement was not this educator's goal in developing and implementing this practicum, it was certainly a by-product of the reading practice activity; therefore, it should be reported.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR, McCracken, 1971), or Uninterruped Sustained Silent Reading (USSR, Hunt, 1971), or High Intensity Practice (HIP, Oliver, 1970) as a specific school reading activity had been in practice for just over a decade. Interestingly ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) named sustained silent reading a descriptor in 1980. Most educators referred to the practice as SSR.

Some educators gave other acronyms or names to the sustained silent reading activity. This educator chose to use the acronym SSR to report the literature.

Many studies have been involved in a variety of SSR programs, numerous articles have been written on the effectiveness of SSR, several educators have supported and developed guidelines for SSR programs. Moore, Jones, and Miller (1980) and Sadoski (1980) in reviews of the literature of SSR in the decade 1970-1980 synthesized the answers to the following questions: (1) What did we really know about SSR? (2) What was the rationale? (3) How was SSR implemented? and (4) What did the research show?

Both reviewers reported the growing momentum of structured SSR programs as a valid component in a school's reading program. Emphasis was placed on the benefits of practicing reading with an adult role model to foster motivation to read. Reports of implementation were cited as well as examples of successful implementation techniques. These SSR reviewers reported that limited studies were conducted to identify results. These studies revealed contradictory findings. Moore and Sadowski believed some of the contradictions were due, in part, to the short time span given to each study. However, the reviewers consistently reported the significantly positive findings to be the growth of attitudes, interest, and the reading habit rather than achievement. The two articles provided an excellent overview of SSR.

Hunt (1971) at the University of Vermont originated the idea of uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR) in his plan for an

individualized school reading program. He called this practice the "pinnacle of reading skills" that promoted total student reading involvement and established the purpose for the reader to "get as many of the important and significant ideas as he can through silent reading" (p.30). In another program, McCracken (1971) removed SSR from the context of Hunt's individualized reading curriculum and demonstrated its favorable effects upon any school reading program. Oliver (1970) at Eastern Washington State College included sustained silent reading in his program called HIP (High Intensity Practice). All three programs provided a given period of school time for silent reading wherein students and teacher read self-selected materials without interruption for the purpose of enjoyment and reading practice.

Self-selected and sustained silent reading was named a critical experience, along with responding to literature; oral and written composing; and mastering the language patterns, in a reading-communication arts plan (PRCP) developed by Botel (1981), University of Pennsylvania, for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Botel claimed self-selected and sustained silent reading produced optimal growth in reading achievement, fostered positive reading attitudes, and developed the reading habit. This working document, supported by experimental research, emphasized the need to have students read on their own as a way of becoming more "effective, efficient, and versatile readers." Botel claimed sustained silent reading was a viable method of encouraging a "lifetime commitment to reading as a means of knowledge and entertainment" (p.7).

Although implementation of SSR was considered flexible and responsive to the uniqueness of each school situation, guidelines were necessary to provide an effective and simple management system. McCracken's (1971) six steps have provided guidelines for many SSR programs throughout the country. Botel (1982), Gambrel (1978), Mork (1972), Risser (1970), and Summers (1982) offered excellent guidelines and strategies helpful in the planning and implementing of successful sustained silent reading programs.

Unlike other reading programs that can only be evaluated after months or years of implementation, McCracken (1971) claimed that educators would observe immediate results in students' reading habits and silent reading performance. Not only would SSR give instant feedback, it could also be adapted to all grade levels. McCracken and McCracken (1972) described a successful kindergarten program where teachers gave brief presentations of several books and then allowed self-selection of books. Children were encouraged to look carefully at pictures and words during sustained reading time. In contrast, Collins (1980), Coughlin (1977), Oliver (1979), Petre (1971), and Reed (1978) reported on successful high school programs.

Many educators (Coughlin, 1977; McCracken, 1977; Gans and Theofield, 1974; Hanson, 1972; Langford, 1978; Petre, 1971; Spinnad, 1976) listed the numerous benefits of successful SSR programs. While endorsing the program, Huck (1976) reminded educators that "one of the best kept secrets in education is that children learn to read by reading" (p.600).

Practice was named the essential element in SSR. Allington (1975) described the SSR process as "the missing link between skill exercises and fluency" (p.815). Supporters contended that students were finally engaging in necessary practice using actual reading material, an activity often overlooked by teachers. Mork (1972) believed that teachers were too often pressured by the myriad skills they must present as part of the prescribed reading curriculum. He saw teachers relegating silent reading to the home or weekly library classes with no certainty the children read. Mork alleged SSR put silent reading in the classroom where it belonged. In an article supporting SSR, McCracken (1969) emphasized that teachers were responsible for promoting a willingness to read as well as teaching reading skills. Gage (1971) took an even stronger stand when considering independent reading. He stated: "We have turned off students, sacrificing our long-range goals of having students finding reading satisfying, for a short-term profit of increased scores on posttests." Gage advised the deemphasis of diagnosis, prescription, and testing and the emphasis of encouraging students "to become involved in reading as an affective process" (p.2).

The teacher's role as a model in the SSR process was listed as another benefit attributed to the program. As the teacher read adult-level material, the process of silent reading was illustrated for the children (McCracken and McCracken, 1978). During SSR, the teacher placed trust in the students' abilities to read, comprehend, and evaluate print. Chambers (1966), Duffy (1967), Gembrell (1978), Mateja (1980), and Summers (1982) also noted the importance of the teacher

model in independent silent reading activities.

A direct outcome of the daily silent reading practice was the claim that SSR increased students' levels of reading achievement. Hunt (1971) believed that students would learn in spite of their frequent mistakes during silent reading. He claimed SSR gave students first-hand experiences with higher level reading skills as they selected and evaluated important ideas. Hunt called this experience a "detective-type activity" (p.30).

Proponents of SSR also claimed that the program encouraged positive students' attitudes toward reading. After six months of reading practice, McCracken (1971) surveyed students to determine their attitudes toward SSR. Students responded that not only had they learned to like reading, they also liked the daily period of quiet. Even the poor readers reported they met success and experienced no embarrassment from their mistakes. The opportunity to choose their own reading materials also pleased the students. These students' positive attitudes toward independent reading were in agreement with other reports that noted students' enthusiasm for a sustained silent reading program (Allington, 1977; Collins, 1980; McCracken, 1971; Sadowski, 1980; Trelease, 1982).

Would this enthusiasm lead to a lifetime reading habit? Alexander and Filler (1976) affirmed that possibility when they recommended a program of sustained silent reading. They vouched the reading habit would develop when students noticed the value placed on independent reading time and when students participated with other students who

read. Duffy (1967), Hanson (1972), and Oliver (1970) found a bolstering of self-concept as a result of their recreational reading programs. The confident readers were on their way to becoming adult book readers. Legrand-Brodsky's (1979) national survey reported 94% of the American public, age 16 years or older, read. Of that percentage, 55% were book readers. She labeled the 39% non-book readers the "lost-book reader" problem (p.949).

Not all educators agreed with SSR's many alleged benefits. Although Huck (1976) favored the use of SSR, she was wary of "artificial aspects" created by the stipulation that all children must read at the same time. Huck suggested the possibility of self-selection of reading time as well as self-selection of reading materials. Spache (1978) also advocated SSR and its positive effects upon student attitude; however, he was not certain the free choice of material would assure that students were reading books that met their needs and interests. Skeptics, Gooch and Westermark (1970), believed sustained silent reading performance could not truly be measured. Both educators assailed SSR as a method which attempted to teach reading "through osmosis" but only succeeded in producing "quiet, non-committal permissiveness" (p.27). Gooch and Westermark alleged students would suffer when skill instruction was put aside, and they were no longer challenged to comprehend and master basic skills.

The supporters of SSR said the skeptics were not seeing sustained silent reading as one component of the total reading program. McCracken (1971) emphasized it as that part of the reading program that provided

the practice necessary in learning to read. Sadoski (1980) saw SSR as practice sessions where students could independently realize and internalize the skills they were being taught while developing their own attitudes and interests as well. Coughlin (1977) offered excellent advice:

> There are no specific ways to measure "results" from this method, and teachers should refrain from the urge...to look for correlation between increased SSR time and improvement on reading test scores. Improvement is qualitative rather than quantitative. (p.353)

As reported earlier, many educators promoted the practice of sustained silent reading, extolling its promising outcomes and benefits. Yet, few studies examined SSR under controlled conditions in order to obtain statistical evidence. And, the available SSR studies did not attempt to determine if the process was superior to other reading practices. Rather, the studies inferred that SSR was not detrimental to student gains in achievement and attitude.

Some studies examined the specific effects of SSR on reading achievement levels. Einhorn (1979), Evans and Towner (1975), Hanson (1972), Petre (1971), Reed (1977), and Wilmot (1975) found no significant differences between experimental and control groups. Langford (1978) reported reading achievement increased significantly at the .05 level. Other studies presented many positive significant findings when looking at sustained silent reading and the affective domain. Bissett (1970), Kemper (1970), Oliver (1970), Pfau (1966), Reed

(1978), and Sauls (1974) reported a positive effect on independent reading habits.

In the review of the literature, it became apparent that the fostering of positive attitudes toward reading and the developing of the reading habit were real concerns of today's educators. Sustained silent reading programs were being included as part of the reading curriculum in an increasing number of classrooms throughout the nation. Although many benefits were attributed to SSR, the claim that positive reading attitudes would be fostered and the reading habit would be developed was pertinent to the practicum. This educator attempted to add data supporting a relationship between sustained silent reading and the development of the reading habit.

Chapter Three

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

A. Statement of General Goals

The practicum was designed to establish reading practice to help young readers develop the power of silent reading. By engaging in self-selected sustained silent reading, the children would become independent, self-sufficient, and self-sustaining readers. And, hopefully, the long-range goal of establishing reading as a lifetime activity for knowledge and enjoyment would have its beginning.

With the accomplishment of the aforementioned goal, it would seem reasonable to expect that the children would perform effectively in the world of printed material. Thus, the first objective of the sustained silent reading program, the children would have staying power with

print, would be achieved.

The second objective of the sustained silent reading program was to expect that the children would exhibit positive attitudes/behaviors toward reading while developing the reading habit. A positive attitude would always be a crucial factor in the development and utilization of reading potential and in the development and attainment of reading as a lifetime activity. This educator wished to make explicit the importance of attitudinal outcome as an educational objective and as an evaluative criterion in the success of a sustained silent reading program. Positive attitudes would result in positive reading behaviors.

A third objective of the sustained silent reading program was to expect that parents would become involved. Reading should not be something that goes on in school and then stops; therefore, it was the intent of this educator to include the parents in the practicum experience. Communication would be improved and the children would benefit from a home-school partnership. Parent input would be an important evaluative criterion in analyzing the results of the sustained silent reading program.

B. Behaviors Expected, Assessment Instruments, and Standards of Performance

The expected behaviors, with accompanying assessment instruments and standards of performance for this practicum, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Anticipated Outcomes of a Sustained Silent Reading Practicum in a Second Grade Classroom

Expected Behavior	Assessment Instruments	Standards of Performance
Children would begin the reading habit by exhibiting staying power with print during the sustained silent reading period.	Direct Observation Use of a timer to establish length of reading session	80% of the children would sustain themselves beginning with five minutes and ultimately reaching twenty minutes.
Children would develop the reading habit by exhibiting positive reading attitudes/behaviors.	Direct Observation Free Response Interview Pre and Posttests	80% of the children would maintain or improve their attitudes/behaviors toward reading.
Parents would become involved in the practicum and would assist in evaluation of children's reading attitudes/behaviors.	Direct Observation Free Response Interview	80% of the parents participating would express positive responses.

C. Description of Evaluation Instruments

The staying power the children exhibited during the timed silent reading period could only be evaluated by direct observation. A timer was used to determine the number of minutes the children's sustained behavior was observed. Mateja (1980) discussed the important benefits of the direct observational reporting technique. Informal observational evaluation was ongoing through the use of a daily log to note student

behaviors from onset to completion of the practicum.

One of the measures to assess the children's attitude toward reading was an attitude scale. A number of reading attitude scales (Deck, 1976; Estes, 1971, Halpers, 1981; Lengyl, 1980; Rodelheim, 1975) were evaluated for possible use. Deck's Attitude Assessment Scale (1976; Lauck, Note 10; Appendix C), primary form, was chosen as the best attitude scale for the practicum. The scale was short, reliable, and easy to score. The wording and nature of the task was easily understood by the respondents, and the scores exhibited sufficient variability. The scale contained a three-choice Likert format--"not really, sometimes, a lot"--to allow for more than two choices and better discrimination among positive responses. The 20-item scale was read to the class by this educator. The children responded in terms of how the statements matched their feelings by circling the desired responses. Half of the items were reversed for scoring purposes. In addition, six additional items were included with the attitude items to ask questions concerning reading behaviors and home-reading environment. The above mentioned portion of the questionnaire was included in the practicum because this educator considered developing reading habit behaviors as an indication of positive reading attitudes. In fact, the second objective was the expectation of positive attitudes/behaviors toward reading.

The evaluation of the children's behaviors as a result of daily exposure to a sustained silent reading time was difficult to test; therefore, in order to form a truer assessment picture, a Student Free

Response Interview (Burkhart, Note 6; Appendix D) was utilized at the end of the practicum. And, too, a Parent Free Response Interview (Burkhart, Note 6; Appendix E) was administered to the parents in order to assist this educator in the evaluation of the SSR program and the effect on the children. Roetter (1977) suggested the personal interview as an excellent means to validate and clarify results.

D. Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

With the children, parents, and this educator assessing the sustained silent reading program, analyzation of the results proved fairly reliable and conclusive. The children's staying power with print was analyzed by recording the length of the silent reading periods and the observed behaviors. A pretest of the attitude/behavior assessment scale was administered at the onset of the practicum, and a posttest of the same attitude/behavior scale was administered at the culmination of the practicum. The attitude/behavior assessments were group administered and hand scored. The free response interviews, with the children and the parents, were scheduled. The information was duly recorded. In order to assure 100% participation of the parents on the free response surveys, the interviews were scheduled as part of the parent-teacher conferences in May. After completing the implementation stage of the practicum, the data from the assessment instruments, interviews, and direct observation, were analyzed in order to report the results, findings, and recommendations.

Chapter Four

Solution Strategy

A. Possible Alternative Solutions

The Pennsylvania Department of Education encouraged all school districts in the state to include sustained silent reading time at all grade levels. The Schuylkill Valley School District's Long Range Planning Report (Note 7) recommended that all schools in the district should include daily silent reading periods in all the grades. Because a daily sustained silent reading program was not included as a component in the reading-communication arts program in the primary grades of the district, this educator wished to include sustained silent reading time in the second grade classroom. And, because the implementation of new curriculum was performed by the classroom teacher, it was this educator's responsibility to develop a workable solution to the problem of providing sufficient sustained silent reading time.

Sustained silent reading could be implemented in one classroom, in one school, or throughout an entire school system. With minimal cost and effort, SSR could be added to a school program at any level. Implementation of SSR was flexible and responsive to the uniqueness of each situation. Regardless of how extensive the program, the following "musts" were noted: 1) commitment was the first step; 2) laying the groundwork was necessary before implementation; 3) the establishment of guidelines would make the program manageable; 4) an advanced promotional campaign and an advanced collection of reading materials would be the motivating forces to get the program started; and 5) the teacher as a

model and facilitator would keep the program going.

A possible solution to the problem and one mentioned frequently in the literature as an effective model for a sustained silent reading time was McCracken's (1971) six-step program:

1. Each student is expected to read silently.
2. The teacher reads with the class.
3. Each student selects something to read.
4. Each period is timed--beginning with five minutes and increasing to as much as fifty minutes.
5. No reports or records are required, although informal discussion may follow by those who wish to do so.
6. Each program is conducted with the entire class or classes heterogeneougly grouped.

If initiated rigidly, McCracken assured immediate success. He stated the program needed a month under the six rules before variations could be instituted. McCracken could not emphasize enough the most important element of his program--the teacher modeling sustained silent reading and related activities. "The failure of the teacher to set an example by reading silently invites students to quit reading no matter how well the SSR habit seems to be established" (p.524). McCracken's model could be implemented with ease in a primary classroom. Many educators began with this model and made it uniquely their own. This educator favored this solution; it was workable.

Because sustained silent reading could fit right in as a complementary component of reading programs at all grade levels, it was

important to establish and nurture the habits of sustained attention to a book--even in children's earliest reading experiences. Hong's (1981) solution for modifying SSR procedures was helpful for beginning and slow readers in the early primary grades. Hong called her modified SSR program "booktime...the final product after a long trial-and-error period" (p.890). With the children as a barometer, she was able to ascertain the needs and wants in the reading environment she created. Each day, Hong introduced specific books to a small group of children for fifteen minutes of guided sustained silent reading. The children were encouraged to read as best they could. This educator found the guidelines and procedures for "booktime" easily executed and soundly valid. Because most of the children arrived in this educator's classroom not viewing themselves as readers, periodic small-group "booktime" had been a part of the reading program for the first half of the year. This educator would continue and expand "booktime," however, because the children had become more competent with print, a more sophisticated silent reading program was needed.

Another solution to get young children started in a silent reading program was designed by Cunningham (1978) for children who had difficulty understanding the concept of silent reading. She called the method "mumble reading." The idea evolved from the comment "I can't read that way. I have to hear myself read it" (p.409). Mumble reading was considered a temporary alternative to silent reading and not a replacement for silent reading. Although many children entered second grade mumble reading, this educator developed a "mind's eye" technique

to assist children to give up so-called mumble reading for "I read that whole page with just my mind," or "You didn't hear a thing, so you don't know what I read, but I know and I can tell you everything on this page." The children were practicing this technique during small-group booktime and in reading group to prove they could read with their minds. This solution was not needed.

A possible solution was a library-centered silent reading program. Mork's (1972) design initiated a "quiet-time" after each weekly visit to the school library. Rosecky (Note 8) described a program that brought the librarian into the classroom with books, a booktalk, and a sustained silent reading time. Ball (1981) combined the school's "Reading is Fundamental" (RIF) program with a silent reading time. Children were encouraged to add to their personal libraries by receiving coupons exchangeable for free paperback books. Bissett's (1969) program stocked a paperback library and required children to write records of their silent reading. Book swapping was encouraged. The librarian at this educator's school attempted a weekly silent reading time. Because of no guidelines and no adult model, the program was fraught with problems. This educator planned to bring the librarian into the second grade's program. Involving RIF distribution could easily be included in the practicum.

The solution to include the whole school in a structured sustained silent reading time was a possibility, but hardly a probable answer to this educator's problem. One school in the county (Kramer, Note 10) called the program "Book Alert." Each week "Book Alert" was announced

over the loud speaker and everyone read for 15 minutes. An entire-school SSR program would need total commitment of administration and staff. This educator's school was not ready for such a venture.

A solution that enabled educators to get more mileage out of a silent reading program was developed by Allington (1975), De La Rose (1979), Vruno (1975), and Watson (1978). Allington and De La Rosa included creative writing in their programs. De La Rosa initiated three sustained silent reading sessions and one sustained creative writing session weekly for an effective program. Allington combined uninterrupted reading with uninterrupted writing. He began small and gradually widened the scope of the task to help children become fluent readers and competent writers. Watson and Vruno included decoding practice. Watson's RSM (reader selected miscues) program enabled the children to deal with decoding problems by placing bookmarks at a troublesome point and continue reading. Later, the children selected three miscues for skill instruction. Vruno's ISSR (interrupted sustained silent reading) program presented a five-step decoding plan enabling children to interrupt their reading to ask for help if they could not decode a troublesome word. This educator expected spin-offs, including creative writing, to evolve from the silent reading practicum and did not want to initiate a dual sustained program. And, because the practicum was not aimed at producing achievement, but was aimed at developing the reading habit, this educator did not want to implement a silent reading program with instructional emphasis.

The solution to involve parents in a silent reading program was an

excellent way for parents and teacher to enter into a home-school partnership. Botel (1981) believed any effort to improve reading should include parents. Lengyl (1980) had families sign an agreement, read together daily, keep a reading record, and receive a certificate upon completion of the family reading program. Concurrently, the children participated in a daily classroom reading program. Lengyl included student and parent surveys. The importance of a school-related reading program with parental participation was not underestimated and this educator included a home reading component in the practicum.

B. Description of and Justification for Solutions Selected

Although this educator was attempting to provide a reading program rich in vitamins, the development of the reading habit by providing a daily independent sustained silent reading time was not part of the reading program. In the second half of the school year, the children were exhibiting the reading competencies and positive self concepts which would enable them to sustain themselves in print successfully for a specified length of time. This educator needed to provide the time, the setting, and the activity to foster the reading habit--a time for all children to have a daily opportunity to read independently from something of their own choosing.

Therefore, in reevaluation of the solution options, McCracken's six-step SSR program was the model chosen to establish sustained silent reading-time structure and get the children reading on a daily basis. This educator took McCracken's guidelines, gave the practice an "I-can't-wait-to-begin" name, and involved the children and parents in

all aspects of the program. The acronym, SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time), was chosen for the daily sustained silent reading time. In so doing, "SQUIRT" became uniquely "our" SSR.

Sustained silent reading, by the very nature of its format, satisfied the goals of the practicum. During the daily silent reading sessions (sufficient time), the children sustained themselves (staying power) in print (practice). By the very fact that the children were reading, they saw themselves as readers (a positive reading attitude) and the reading habit was nurtured (the long-range goal of lifetime reading). By adding the dimension of parent involvement (modeling for a literate home environment), all objectives in the practicum were attainable.

In the sixth month of the school year, all children in this educator's classroom displayed a reading competence which allowed them to be comfortable with print. The children needed sufficient time to practice their new-found confidence. The children needed time to make reading a part of their lives. This educator's chosen solution gave the children time to practice and catch the reading habit.

The solution selected proved a sound educational procedure that complemented the objectives of the practicum. These objectives were attainable in a short period of time. Although a specified amount of time was required each day, the related activities of the practicum evolved naturally in other areas of the curriculum. And, there was a minimum outlay of funds (badges and paperback books).

C. Calendar of Plan for Implementation

-Practicum Planning Meeting with Principal (June, 1982)

-Literature Search; PPQ; Preliminary Literature Review (July, 1982)

-Permission to Write from Practicum Reviewer (August, 1982)

-Data Collection (August-September, 1982)

-Student Interest Inventory (September, 1982)

-First Student Free Response Interviews (September, 1982)

-Parent Involvement: Parent-Teacher Conferences (November, 1982)

-SQUIRT Promotional Materials Preparation (December, 1982; January 1983)

-Second Student Free Response Interview (January, 1983)

-Practicum Proposal to Practicum Reviewer (March 1, 1983)

-Permission to Implement (March 6, 1983)

-Implementation: Promotional Week (March 7-11, 1983)

-First Parent Information Letter (March 9, 1983)

-Student Reading Attitude Scale: Pretest (March 10, 1983)

-SQUIRT Guidelines (March 11, 1983)

-SQUIRT Preparation Week (March 14-18, 1983)

-Second Parent Information Letter (March 18, 1983)

-First SQUIRT Session (March 21, 1983)

-Third Parent Information Letter (March 25, 1983)

-Daily Log of Daily SQUIRT Sessions and Related Activities: (March, April, May, June, 1983)

-Fourth Parent Information Letter (May 9, 1983)

-Parent Free-Response Interviews: Parent-Teacher Conferences (May 16-20, 1983)

-Last SQUIRT Session (May 27, 1983)

-Student Reading Attitude Scale: Posttest (June 1, 1983)

-Student Free Response Interviews (June 3-8, 1983)

-SQUIRT Awards (June 10, 1983)

-Final Parent Information Letter (June 13, 1983)

-Data Compilation (June-July, 1983)

-Practicum Report Preparation (August-September, 1983)

-Inservice: Dissemination of Practicum (October 10, 1983)

-Practicum Report (October-December, 1983)

D. Report of Action Taken

In order to assure cooperation and involvement of key persons in the SSR program, the support of the principal, librarian, and parents was obtained in the early stages of the practicum. Conferences and memorandums kept them informed throughout the planning stages of the practicum. At strategic times, this educator enlisted the services of these key people. By involving these persons in the early stages of the practicum, their active participation was assured.

Prior to implementation of SQUIRT as a daily classroom activity, several activities were responsible for laying the necessary groundwork toward successful solution of the practicum problem. The children needed to be prepared to meet print independently if a successful sustained silent reading program was to be initiated. As described in Chapter Two, preassessment of the children's reading achievement, interests, and attitudes helped this educator plan for instruction both in the cognitive and affective domains. An SSR program began after the children met success with print.

Provisions for modeling, both in school and in the home, were essential ingredients in successful SSR programs. Exemplary models needed to be in evidence in order for children to begin to put into practice what they saw happening. This educator was an exemplary model by showing an interest in and a love of reading whenever and wherever possible during each school day. A daily read-aloud time not only presented this educator with an ideal modeling technique, it also nurtured the children's reading appetites and reinforced and/or advanced their language competencies as did teacher-planned literature experiences involving art, music, drama, dance, and creative writing.

Motivational strategies would make a good SSR program better (Gambrell, 1981). Although this educator wanted to give the children the opportunity to generate ideas for SQUIRT, several teacher-initiated promotional activities introduced SQUIRT to the children. A banner "SQUIRT is Coming" announced the program on the first day of Promotional Week. A bulletin board bearing the SQUIRT logo (Appendix G) gave the children the opportunity to unlock the mystery of SQUIRT. Each day a message was posted around the logo in the form of a large raindrop blurb as an additional clue. The messages were:

First Day: Our principal thinks SQUIRT is great!
He's coming to join us.

Second Day: Our librarian is a friend of SQUIRT.
She will help us.

Third Day: Your parents want you to have SQUIRT everyday.
They like the idea.

Fourth Day: Your teacher is anxious for SQUIRT to begin.
She LOVES SQUIRT!

Fifth Day: You will be SUPER QUIET during SQUIRT.
You get to pick your own ___?___ .

Along with the final message which was on the last day of Promotional Week, a large figure with hands behind her back and with the blurb, "Behind my back is a ___?___ ," was placed beside the bulletin board. When the children looked behind the figure, they discovered a book. With all the available clues before them, it was time for the children to write their guesstimates to the question, "What is SQUIRT?" and place them in the guesstimate box. After the guesstimates were read by the "Leader of the Day," SQUIRT was discussed. Questions were answered. And guidelines for the program were established.

An understanding of the acronym, SQUIRT, and an understanding of the term Sustained Silent Reading were important concepts to be taught. This educator made sure the children knew and understood the meaning of each word in the acronym. The meaning of sustained silent reading and its relationship to SQUIRT was explained. The bulletin board changed from blurbs unlocking the mystery of SQUIRT to the following chart:

1. Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time
2. Sustained means we read for a required number of minutes.
   Silent means we are as quiet as possible when we read silently.
   Reading means we get together with a good book or magazine and READ, READ, READ!

3. SQUIRT Signup

Realizing the importance of commitment, this educator believed the children needed to commit themselves to the program by visible means that would constantly remind them of their commitment. The children and this educator committed themselves to ten weeks of SQUIRT by affixing their signatures on the book portion of the SQUIRT chart. The principal, librarian, parents, and other guests who came and read with us would sign the same commitment chart on the day they initially read with us. In addition to the promotional activities, the pretest Reading Attitude Scale (Appendix C) was administered to the children and the First Parent Information Letter (Appendix H) was sent to the parents.

Preparation Week followed. A "SQUIRT Is Near!" banner greeted the children. The week was a busy one with the children, parents, librarian, and this educator gathering reading materials for a SQUIRT classroom library. The children followed up the initial teacher-prepared communication, which was sent the previous week, with a student-prepared letter to their parents enlisting their help with the SQUIRT library collection. All the children and their parents contributed to the special library. The librarian added books from the school's library. The principal arrived with some magazines. This educator brought some books and magazines from home. The children talked about the materials as they worked together. All reading matter loaned was checked carefully for an owner's name. It was understood by the children that the books and magazines from the school's library and the regular classoom library may be used at SQUIRT time too. By the end

of Preparation Week, the SQUIRT library was ready.

It was time for personal book selection. The fact that the children always read books of their choice was emphasized. Browsing time was provided. This educator talked about some of the books and magazines. The first SQUIRT reading materials were chosen. SQUIRT bookmarks were designed and made by the children. The rules for SQUIRT were reviewed and posted on the bulletin board:

1. Everyone chooses something to read.
2. A timer is set.
3. Everyone reads.
4. There are no interruptions.
5. You may share what you read, but only if you want to do so.

Using a timer to time each session and charting that time on a graph each day served as important motivational techniques. The timer was shown and explained to the children. As a preview, the timer was set for one minute and the children quietly waited for the ring. The children were informed that the timer would be out of view so that they would not be tempted to watch it during their silent reading time. A graph to record the minutes read each day was explained and posted on the bulletin board. And, the parents received the Second Parent Information Letter (Appendix I). Included in the letter was an invitation to come and join a SQUIRT session.

Finally, the "SQUIRT is Here!" banner greeted the children and the first SQUIRT session took place. The following sign was posted in the doorway:

Do Not Disturb - SQUIRT In Session

Please come back later or come in and READ

With books in hands and the timer set, the children and this educator quietly read for five minutes. All SQUIRT rules were followed. At the end of the session, this educator shared with the children. After talking about the book, a few sentences were read to the children. They were given an opportunity to ask questions. Several children volunteered to share something from their books. This educator praised the children for a good first session. The first five minutes were charted on the time graph. A discussion followed of queries proffered by this educator:

1. Did you have a good reading period?
2. Did you read well?
3. Were you able to concentrate?
4. Was it hard to keep your mind on your reading?
5. Could you keep ideas in your book straight in your mind?
6. Were there words you didn't know?
7. How did you figure them out?
8. Did you like reading silently for five minutes without interruption?
9. What do you think of SQUIRT?

This educator became acutely aware of the importance of extensive planning and preparation. The first session was problem free.

Following McCracken's (1971) suggestion, the ten-week program began very structured. This educator adhered to the guidelines. The children

chose their own reading materials. There was no book exchanging during reading time. The children were encouraged to choose a back-up book if they thought they might finish their reading material before the en of the timed session. Browsing time was provided each day so that all children would have a book ready at the beginning of each session. If a child forgot to get a book, this educator supplied that child with something to read for that particular session. Thusly, the problem of not having a book ready was solved before it presented itself.

The length of the sessions was decided each day and a timer was always used to culminate the SQUIRT session. The children read for five minutes on the first day of SQUIRT. Since all the children were able to sustain themselves with no talking and fidgiting, the five-minute session became the daily required time for many days. When the children voted for a ten-minute session in the second week of SQUIRT, they soon realized they were not ready for the longer time and the children voted to go back to the five-minute session. Gradually, the period was lengthened to ten minutes, later to fifteen minutes, and eventually to twenty minutes. The reading time was charted daily so that the children could see the progress they were making in the amount of time they spent reading at sessions.

There were no interruptions during the sessions. If there were instances of talking or fidgiting, a prearranged signal soon reminded the children of the rule. At the end of the session, the rules were reexplained to any talkers or fidgiters. By paying close attention to the children's ability to sustain themselves, by ignoring the few

fidgiters whenever possible, and by being deeply engrossed in one's personal reading, this educator knew the need to signal infractors would be rare. And, the children knew that if there was a gross disruption, the sessions would end immediately.

Realizing the single most important key to the success or failure of SSR is the model provided, this educator read with the children every day. By talking about the material read, this educator showed the children a personal enjoyment of reading. In addition, knowing the children needed to see all sorts of people reading to add to the significance of the silent reading experience, many persons were invited to join the SQUIRT sessions. On a prearranged day, the principal, with magazine in hand, joined our session. At the end of the session, the principal shared his reading. In subsequent sessions, the librarian, custodian, secretary, classroom aide, and some of the parents visited our sessions. These unannounced visitors, with reading material in hand, quietly entered the classroom to read with the children. If a person entered the classroom without reading material, this educator quietly proffered reading matter.

Cognizant of the fact that parents play an important role in the reading success of their children and knowing that parents consider reading more important than any other subject, this educator included a voluntary (non-monitored) sustained home reading program in the practicum. There was teacher guidance through oral and written communications. At the end of Promotion Week and Preparation Week, the parents received letters concerning related information pertinent to

their understanding of and involvement in the practicum. Support for the SQUIRT program was received at the fall parent-teacher conferences. Relevant information was sent home to parents in two previous letters. At the end of the first week of SQUIRT sessions, the parents received a Third Parent Information Letter (Appendix J). This letter invited the parents to participate in RAH (Reading At Home). The home reading program was explained to the children. The children were encouraged to help parents set up either a daily or a weekend program. It was hoped many families would participate in RAH.

The children were off to a good start. This educator realized interest needed to be maintained so that the SQUIRT sessions and independent silent reading would continue to rate high with the children. Although the room was saturated with books and reading incentives, this educator believed the program should be supplemented and expanded by creating new ways to reach all the children and maintain enthusiasm. Weekly promotional ideas were conducted. A comfortable reading corner was enlarged and made more inviting for additional free reading. A SQUIRT center was established where children could do things with books. Filmstrips and records of storybook favorites were housed at the listening center. A bulletin board featured student participation gimmicks such as: "Look What I Read," "Sign Up To Share," "Is SQUIRT Fun? If Yes, Sign Here," and other catchy phrases and questions. From time to time, this educator introduced a new book. Different kinds of children's literature were introduced to encourage the children to read a variety of different books. Each week, an

"Author of the Week" was featured with an eye-catching bulletin board which gave interesting data about the author. Also featured was a collection of the author's books. Wordless picture books were introduced and children were invited to write a text. Authors' and illustrators' addresses were posted and children were invited to write to them. Art and craft materials were made available for artistic creations. Opportunities were presented for the children to: 1) advertise books; 2) role play; 3) pantomime; 4) stage puppet shows and plays; 5) collect and do something with jokes, riddles, and poems; 6) make up new endings for a book; 7) tape record a book; 8) make, write, illustrate, and publish a book; 9) dress like a book character; 10) go to the library to engage in research triggered by a book; 11) make a map or diorama of the setting of a book.

This educator assisted the children with many of the spin-off activities. Three activities which garnered much interest, enthusiasm, and hardwork and which resulted in a great deal of satisfaction and fun were a group of plays, a class book of poetry, and a storybook character day. From a number of chosen picture books, the children chose three books to dramatize. The class was divided into three groups. The children in each group were responsible for the dialogue, costumes, props, and scenery. The plays were performed for the first and second grades. After reading and sharing poetry, a book of cinquains, Word Music, was written illustrated, and published by the children. Each child and this educator contributed a cinquain and illustration. The school secretary duplicated the books. The children put the books

together and hand colored the illustrations. Books were presented to the principal, the secretary, and the librarian. The librarian catalogued the book and placed it on the poetry section of the library for circulation. The children were given books for their personal libraries. On "Storybook Character Day," the children and this educator chose a character that they particularly liked in a book they read and dressed up like that character for the day. Each character was given the opportunity to role play the character, give clues, and answer questions as the other children guessed the name of the character and the title of the book from which the character came. An added feature was a storybook parade.

The SQUIRT library changed weekly as the children, librarian, and this educator exchanged and/or added reading materials. At all times, there was a well-stocked library of reading materials on different reading levels. Three school events, a "Spring RIF (Reading is Fundamental) Day," the school's annual "Book Fair," and an eighth grade's "Write and Illustrate a Book for a Child" project supplied new and additional books for the SQUIRT library. In fact, the SQUIRT collection became so extensive that class librarians were needed to maintain it. The children volunteered to serve as class librarians on specific days. Two children served daily.

The role of the librarian cannot be overemphasized. Throughout the practicum, the librarian was involved in suggesting and supplying books, teaching library skills, and assisting in special activities. Special classes were scheduled for special in-house library projects. The

librarian also visited the classroom to engage in SQUIRT and other related activities.

Evaluation was ongoing throughout the practicum. A daily practicum log recorded direct observations and other relevant data. Behaviors and/or incidents of staying power, concentration levels, physical obstacles, interest levels, reading rate, book selections, book swapping, enthusiasm levels, relevant statements, related activities, free reading time other than SQUIRT, uses of the library, student-teacher interactions, application of reading skills, and depth of involvement were recorded for future reference and analyzation. Roseky (Note 8, 1982) mentioned the importance of using one's own sensitivity to children and their responses if one wanted to evaluate the children's experiences with books fully. It was the intent of this educator to tune in to the children's sensitivities as behaviors and responses were carefully noted in the practicum log.

Parents gave input at the parent-teacher conferences in May. Prior to the scheduled conferences, the parents received a fourth letter (Appendix K) from this educator. The letter gave additional information regarding the SQUIRT program and prepared the parents for the SQUIRT Parent Free Response Interview (Appendix E). There was 100% attendance at the conferences; therefore, there was 100% participation on the SQUIRT free-response interview. The comments secured from the parents at this interview were an important component of the practicum and aided this educator in its evaluation.

At the culmination of the SQUIRT practicum, each child received the

"SQUIRT Award." A SQUIRT certificate, signed by the principal and this educator, was presented. The certificates were printed by the high school print shop. A badge, "BOOKS ARE BIG FUN," was pinned on each child. The badges were purchased from the American Library Association (Waldron, Note 12). And, a paperback book, inscribed with a personal comment by this educator, was given to each child. Individual reading interests and reading levels were considered by this educator when the books were chosen for each child. The paperback books were purchased from paperback book clubs. The cost of the badges and books for this award was incurred by this educator.

The week following the last practicum SQUIRT session, May 27, 1983, this educator administered the posttest of the Student Reading Attitude Scale (Appendix B), conducted the Student Free Response Interview (Appendix D), and sent a final Parent Information Letter (Appendix L). The letter gave the parents some suggestions for summer reading. In addition, information of: 1) a PBS summer television series, "Reading Rainbow," (Ganek, 1983) featuring award-winning children's picture books with related activities; 2) the local library's summer hours, summer programs, and summer bookmobile's schedule; and 3) children's books and magazines a particular child might wish to receive as a gift or might want to borrow from the library were enclosed.

Although the SQUIRT sessions for the practicum evaluation ended on May 27, 1983, the daily scheduled SQUIRT activity continued to the last day of the school year. The decision to continue the SQUIRT sessions was made by the children.

In June and July, 1983, data was compiled and analyzed. After reviewing the practicum proposal, the calendar for implementation, and the daily log, this educator realized how closely the practicum followed the planned solution strategies. There were no delineations, although there were additions which were easily assimilated into the program. There were no discernible roadblocks. The few minor problems (book selection time, the forgetters, the talkers, and fidgiters) were effectively and efficiently solved. The practicum was accomplished smoothly and without difficulty. With careful study and planning, this practicum could be replicated successfully with little or minimal changes.

In August, 1983, the results were shared with the principal. The writing of the practicum report began. Preparation for dissemination of the practicum to colleagues took place in September. And, the actual practicum dissemination was presented to the faculty and staff at an in-service day in October, 1983.

Chapter 5

Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

A. Presentation and Analysis of Results

As stated in Chapter Three, the practicum was designed "to establish reading practice to help young readers develop the power of reading." This reading practice, in the form of daily sustained silent reading sessions, would help the children become independent, self-sufficient, and self-sustaining readers. And, hopefully, reading as a lifetime activity for knowledge and enjoyment would have its

beginning.

To measure the success of the sustained silent reading sessions, the following three objectives were accomplished:

1. The children began the reading habit by exhibiting staying power with print during daily sustained silent reading periods.
2. The children exhibited positive reading attitudes/behaviors while engaging in sustained silent reading sessions and related activities.
3. The parents of the children became involved participants and assisted this educator in the evaluation of the children's reading attitudes/behaviors.

Objective 1. The first objective dealt with the ability of the children to perform effectively in the world of print during daily timed silent reading sessions. A timer set for a specific number of minutes at the beginning of each session monitored the length of the sessions. All the children were expected to read without interruption until the timer's ring announced the end of the session. As the children demonstrated, by their behaviors, a readiness for a lengthened period of sustained silent reading, the timer was set for additional minutes. A graph which recorded the children's staying power with print was updated each day. The staying power was evalated by direct observation of the children's behaviors during the SQUIRT sessions.

The findings showed a gradual increase of staying power from an initial five minutes to an ultimate 20 minutes. Because there was no talking or fidgiting, at the first session, the children voted to

continue the five-minute sessions. In the second week, a majority vote to advance the sessions to ten minutes proved disastrous. A few children became whisperers. Approximately half the class became restless. A prearranged signal squelched the disturbances. After a discussion of the ten-minute session, the children quickly voted to return to a five-minute session. The children learned their lesson well. Thereafter, they advanced their reading time gradually.

At the onset of the practicum, the children set a reading-time goal of 15 minutes. Halfway through the practicum, they decided to aim for a twenty-minute session. On the last day of the practicum, a twenty-minute period was realized.

The totalling of the number of minutes of SQUIRT was a red-letter day for the children. When the minutes on the graph were totaled on the last day of the practicum, there was a grand total of 476 minutes. The children had exhibited a sizeable growth of staying power with print in the ten-week SQUIRT program. They were proud of their accomplishment. And, they voted to continue the SQUIRT sessions even though the practicum had ended.

In analyzing the results of the first objective, a number of success factors were noted by this educator.

1. The timer was a great motivator. It appeared the children were determined not to stop until the ringing of the bell.
2. The graph showing the number of minutes read was another great motivator. Each "leader of the day" considered the charting of the minutes an important job.

3. The children played a most important role. They acted as barometers. They seemed to sense the number of minutes they would be able to sustain themselves in print.
4. The children's voice in ascertaining the number of minutes read was instrumental in reaching the staying-power goal. Involvement in decision making appeared to foster commitment.
5. The children's right to read materials of their own choices was instrumental in keeping them reading. The children were reading what they wanted to read.
6. The influence of peers was most effective in keeping those few children in line who might have become the disturbers. The fact that no session had to be terminated before the assigned time showed the power of peer influence. The children monitored each other.
7. The adult role model was a key influence. This educator, by paying close attention to the children's ability to sustain themselves with print, by ignoring the few fidgiters whenever possible, and by being a good silent reading model, was a positive factor in keeping the children reading.

The standard of performance for the first objective stated that 80% of the children would sustain themselves with print beginning with five minutes and culminating with 15 minutes. The first objective was met.

Objective 2. The second objective was concerned with the maintenance and growth of positive reading attitudes/behaviors as a result of the sustained silent reading sessions. Through the use of: 1) direct observations (daily log); 2) a Free Response Interview (Appendix D); and 3) a pre and posttest of a Reading Attitude Scale (Appendix C), this educator was able to evaluate and analyze the children's reading attitudes and reading behaviors fairly and adequately. Input from the parents (Objective 3) gave this educator additional information.

At the onset of the practicum, due to an extensive six-month program geared toward fostering postive feelings toward reading, all the children exhibited a degree of positive reading behaviors. It was this educator's responsibility to help the children continue to feel good about reading and to help them "catch" the reading habit.

In perusing the daily log to report the reading attitudes and reading behaviors of the children, the enthusiasm of the children was continually prevalent. Twenty enthusiastic children signed up for SQUIRT a Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time. Twenty enthusiastic children helped stock the SQUIRT library. And 20 enthusiastic children anxiously awaited the first day of SQUIRT. The enthusiasm continued throughout the practicum.

The children's positive behaviors were evidenced daily. There was an eagerness to have SQUIRT material ready each day. Paperbacks and magazines were very popular. Joke books, riddle books, and poetry books were in demand. Book swapping was common. Although there were no required reports, sharing was prevalent from the beginning to the end of

the practicum. They enjoyed sharing jokes, riddles, poems, a favorite picture, a caption under a picture, a special word, a particular sentence, an interesting paragraph, and simple retellings of what was read. And, the children referred to their readings incidentally at other than scheduled sharing times.

The children engaged in many related activities. The work jobs at the SQUIRT Center were popular. There was a waiting list as the children signed up for the Listening Center. Many spinoffs of literature activities were persued enthusiastically.

The children interacted with the persons involved in the practicum. The guests were greeted with smiles and encouraged to share their readings. The principal was a favorite guest. The children were delighted when a parent arrived to participate in a SQUIRT session. The children engaged in the SQUIRT sessions with an enthusiastic seriousness that impressed the visitors. The children's interactions with the librarian more than doubled. Visits to the library and the number of books borrowed increased.

The behaviors this educator was hopeful would occur became a reality. More children engaged in independent reading other than the sustained silent reading session. Even the few reluctant readers, who would rather play, gravitated to the sofa or the bean bag chairs for some free reading. On one given day, this educator counted 14 children engaged in independent reading. This is in direct contrast to the four to six observed by this observer before the SQUIRT sessions started. There was an absence of "I don't want to read today" in the daily log.

For 10 weeks, not one child showed a negative attitude toward the SQUIRT program. In fact, there were days some of the children verbally showed disappointment that the sesion was over. By the same token, there were days when one or two children visibly displayed relief the session was over. They were the unusually active children who sometimes found it difficult to keep still for the required minutes; however, they always put forth the effort.

This educator, as model and facilitator, was instrumental in keeping the children actively involved. The sharings of this educator gave the children ideas for their sharings. Someone was always ready to pick up on a proffered book or activity suggested by this educator.

The planned literature experiences kept interest high. The children showed a greater excitement for "Spring RIF" than they did for "Autumn RIF." The "Book Fair" was eagerly anticipated. Every child purchased at least one item. The books written by the eighth-grade language arts class were very special since they were written and dedicated especially for them. The three books that became plays were eagerly read by the children. When the children participated in writing and illustrating the book of cinquains, Word Music, more poetry books were noticed in the hands of the readers. After the book was catalogued and placed on the library shelf for children to borrow, some of the children decided to write and illustrate their own books for publication. On "Storybook Day," the children not only dressed as a character, but were also given the opportunty to "sell" their books. This resulted in more motivation for the children to read something not

read before. Many books involving the aforementioned activities were swapped and shared. With the book swapping and book sharing, the children were reading a greater variety of books. Even the "stuck" behavior readers relented and began to read other than their everyday fare.

On "SQUIRT Award Day," the children wore their "BOOKS ARE BIG FUN" badges proudly. And, on that day, they read the paperback books especially chosen for them. When this educator turned photographer and took a picture of 20 smiling children wearing the SQUIRT badges with their arms extended displaying their SQUIRT certificates and SQUIRT paperbacks, the smiles seemed to say "Look what we accomplished!" They were eager to share their awards with their family.

In evaluating the SQUIRT sessions and the myriad of related activities, this educator readily noted the positive reading attitudes and the positive reading behaviors exhibited by the children. Although some children showed more enthusiasm for SQUIRT and the related activities than others, all the children showed some degree of enthusiastic participation. The direct observations of this educator, dutifully recorded in a daily log, revealed a maintenance of or an improvement of reading attitudes and reading behaviors by all 20 children. Just as McCracken (1971) reported, this educator observed immediate results in the children's reading attitudes and reading habits.

In analyzing the results of the direct observations with regard to the maintenance, improvement, and development of positive reading

attitudes and reading behaviors, the following success factors were noted: 1) commitment; 2) laying the groundwork; 3) establishing the structure; 4) providing motivational techniques and strategies; and 5) being the role model. At the same time, this educator cannot negate peer influence. With this educator as model and facilitator, the children generated a "catch the fun of reading" among themselves.

The Free Response Interview (Appendix D), gave this educator an opportunity to hear the children's personal evaluation of SQUIRT and its effect on the development of positive reading attitudes/behaviors. As a self-reporting instrument, the open-ended questions of the personal interview gave the children a chance to discuss their feelings about the sustained silent reading program rather than give a specific answer to a statement as they did on the Reading Attitude Scale (Appendix C).

The findings on the free response interviews corroborated the findings of this educator's direct observations: SQUIRT gave the children an opportunity to discover that reading is an important independent activity which they can participate in successfully.

The children were most open and candid with their answers when interviewed about SQUIRT. In response to the statement: "Tell me what you think about SQUIRT," the majority of the answers were similar to the following:

It's fun.

I like the quiet.

It gives me time to read what I want to read.

I like being timed.

I like reading paperbacks and magazines.

I don't have to do workbook pages with my book.

I'm good at SQUIRT.

I learned to like reading better.

I get to read harder books.

I get to read chapter books.

When the children were asked to rate SQUIRT as "great" or "OK," 16 of the children responded "great" and four of the children responded "OK." It is interesting to note that the four children who responded "OK" were very active boys who liked reading, but preferred to play. One of those boys was an advanced reader. The other three boys were average readers. Throughout the practicum, the four boys willingly cooperated with the program. They participated in all the activities with varying degrees of enthusiasm; sometimes high; sometimes low. Their interviews did reveal an improvement of reading attitudes and reading behaviors over what they exhibited in the beginning.

The interviews also revealed that a majority of the children were reading a variety of books and magazines. Several children remarked, "I never read any magazines before SQUIRT." Many of the children expressed an interest in books of jokes, riddles, and poetry. Some children mentioned their interest in reading about real people. One child said, "I even read the newspaper."

When discussing reading at home, most children told this educator they were reading more at home. Of those children who reported they were having RAH (Reading At Home), more children stated they were having

week-end RAH. They added the fact that by having RAH at home, they were having SQUIRT every day. Fewer children reported they were having daily RAH. Several children reported they were having RAH with their mothers, but not with their fathers. One child mentioned having RAH with a sibling. Two children said they had RAH by themselves. Some of the children mentioned there were times when they didn't have RAH because they forgot or they were too busy. There was not one child who didn't read some of the time at home. Prior to SQUIRT and the related RAH program, there were some children who stated they did not read at home.

When talking over the children's use of the library and the number of books taken home, all the children stated they were borrowing more books from the library. The librarian also noted a marked increase in the variety of books and the number of books going home from the library each week. She stated the fact that no children were leaving the library session empty-handed. Some children mentioned they were taking books for other family members to read during RAH. A few children talked about having been to the public library. Some children said they were going to get a library card and go to the public library in the summer.

When queried about their reading ability, most children declared they were better readers. Several children reported they read "about the same." These children were some of the advanced readers. All the other children believed they were better readers since SQUIRT. A discussion followed as to what happened then they encountered a difficult word. Some children mentioned, "I figure out the words."

Other children said, "I skip the words I can't figure out and keep on going." One child said "I still know what I'm reading even if I don't know all the words." From this discussion, this educator learned that children were able to read and understand harder materials. Difficult words appeared to pose no problem.

In answer to the question concerning the continuance of SQUIRT, all but four of the children said they wanted to continue SQUIRT every day. These four children said they would like to skip a day once in a while. These were the same four children who mentioned SQUIRT was "OK." Three of the children expressed a desire to have more time for independent reading. And 13 children wanted SQUIRT to remain the same. All the children decided they wanted SQUIRT when they got to third grade. The children told this educator they wanted SQUIRT because it "gives us a chance to read what we want to read."

As for the reading in the summer, all the children answered in the affirmative. When queried further, not all the children were going to read books. A few of the boys said they were only going to read magazines. Some children stated they might not have time to read every day, but they would try to read something daily. Some children remarked they would take something to read with them on trips. When this educator asked the children what other things they might read, the children came up with many readable items. They were certainly seeing themselves as readers of many things.

The answers to the query: "Do you have a favorite book?" were most gratifying. In Chapter Two, this educator reported seven children

mentioning a favorite book in September. In June, all the children told this educator the name of a favorite book. Twelve children mentioned more than one favorite book. Many of the children's choices were books this educator had read to them during the year. In fact, 18 of the 20 children mentioned books read to them at "read aloud" time. Many of the children were observed reading one of their favorite books during SQUIRT sessions.

The findings of the free response interviews revealed a commonality of factors:

1. The children were learning to read for knowlede and pleasure.
2. The children appreciated the "quiet" of SQUIRT.
3. The children enjoyed reading what they wanted to read.
4. The children read a variety of reading matter.
5. The children were reading more at home.
6. The children borrowed more books from the library.
7. The children wanted to continue daily SQUIRT sessions.
8. The children intended to read something over the summer.
9. The children were able to name a favorite book.

In analysing the children's responses during the interviews, this educator came to realize the full impact of the SQUIRT program on the formation of positive reading attitudes and on the development of the reading habit. In contrast to previous answers on the Student Interest Inventory (Appendix A) and the Student Free Response Interview (Appendix B), the children revealed the many benefits of the daily independent reading practice. SQUIRT gave them a reason to learn their skills in

"reading gr[illegible]p." Because the children were given the opportunity for this practice, they not only read more books, they also read a greater variety of reading material. Interestingly, the children were reading more difficult materials with relative ease. With so much emphasis on reading and related activities, the children were tuned in to books; consequently, they borrowed more books from the library, and they read more at home. With all this reading savy, it was no problem to name a favorite book without a moment's hesitation. The interview responses gave additional credence to the attainment of the second objective. The children discovered, by engaging in SQUIRT, what this educator observed; the more the children read, the better they read; the better the children read, the better they felt about reading; and the better they felt about reading, the more they read. Might there be a better way to improve reading attitudes and reading behaviors? This educator doubted it.

The third assessment instrument used to evaluate the maintenance and growth of positive reading attitudes and reading behaviors was Deck's (1976) Reading Attitude Scale (Appendix C). Particular relevant answers on the pre and posttests of the scale were compared and analyzed by this educator. The information regarding the children's choices on the pre and posttests, as received by this educator, was noted on Table Five and Table Six.

Table 5

Attitude Scale Results Related to Reading Attitudes

of 20 Second Grade Children

Scale Item Number	Behavior	Children Reporting: Not Really PR	Not Really PO	A Little PR	A Little PO	A Lot PR	A Lot PO
10	Love Reading	1	0	6	4	13	16
17	Love to Read Books	2	0	6	5	12	15
18	Like to Find Books to Read	3	1	3	4	12	15
21	Can Learn Things from Books	0	0	1	0	19	20
24	Want More Time to Read	5	4	5	7	10	9
26	Good to Know How to Read	0	0	0	0	20	20
12	Get Tired of Reading	10	16	6	2	4	2
14	Reading School Books Waste of Time	17	18	3	1	0	0
19	Hate to Read	15	18	4	2	1	0
20	Rather Play Than Read	8	11	8	5	4	4
23	Want to be Absent from Reading Class	15	16	2	4	4	0
29	Reading Worst Part of Day	16	19	3	1	1	0

PR: Pretest, March 10; PO: Posttest June 2, 1983

Table 5 revealed some change toward a more positive response by some of the children on the attitude portion of the assessment scale.

Most of the responses were already positive on the pretest; therefore, many responses remained the same over the ten-week period. The findings on both the pre and posttests indicated the children's awareness of the importance of learning to read for knowledge. The findings also indicated that reading could be considered fun. Interestingly, when checking the individual response sheets, this educator discovered all the less-than-positive responses (as indicated on Table 5) were made by boys. This said something for the sedentary act of reading and active boys. The four children who indicated they did not want "more time to read" were the same boys who gave the same response when interviewed.

The findings revealed reading attitude rather than attitude change. In analyzing the results, this educator conjectured:

1. Perhaps, the attitude scale as an assessment tool would have been more effective if the pretest had been administered earlier in the school year. Ten weeks was a short time to expect much change.
2. Perhaps, there was less movement by the majority of children because many children had already shown positive reading attitudes toward reading prior to the onset of the SQUIRT sessions.
3. Perhaps, some children might have circled the response they believed the teacher wanted. Deck (1976) reported that young children had a strong tendency to answer very positively to reading attitude scales.
4. Perhaps, attitude change occured for some children even

though the change had not been perceived (Langford, 1978).

5. Perhaps, an attitude scale that adequately measured change had not yet been developed (Langford, 1978).

Although the attitude scale was not as effective an assessment tool in measuring the growth of reading attitudes as direct observation and the free response interview, this educator found it helpful when specific children's responses were compared to their classroom behaviors and interview responses.

Table 6

Attitude Scale Results Related to Home Reading Behaviors of 20 Second Grade Children

Scale Item Number	Behavior	Children Reporting Never/None PR	PO	A Little/Few PR	PO	A Lot PR	PO
2	Read at Home	0	0	11	6	9	14
3	Go to Library	15	15	4	4	1	1
4	Number Library Books Weekly	2	0	15	11	3	9
5	Books of Own	0	0	0	0	20	20
6	Parents Read	2	0	8	3	10	17

PR: Pretest, March 10; PO: Posttest, June 1, 1983

The results of the home reading portion of the assessment scale were more informative than the reading attitude portion. Table Six revealed a literate environment with all children reading. Although two children reported their parents as "never reading" on the pretest, these

same two children reported their parents as reading "a little" on the posttest. It was interesting to note that 17 children reported their parents as reading "a lot" as contrasted to 10 children reporting the same response on the pretest. This educator believed the home reading component of SQUIRT was responsible for the change.

In analyzing the low incidence of families going to the public library, this educator decided the response needed clarification. It was this educator's belief that many families did not go to the public library because it was a distance from their homes. It was also believed that, because of work schedules and numberous activities, there was no time to go to the library. And, too, a regularly scheduled bookmobile made weekly stops at various locations in the school district.

There was considerable change in the number of library books borrowed weekly. By the end of the practicum, the nine children who reported "a lot" borrowed more than four books. The remaining 11 children borrowed three to four books weekly.

Did the SQUIRT program effect home reading behaviors? According to the responses on the home reading behavior assessment of the attitude scale, there was a positive direction in the development of the reading habit in the homes just as there was a positive direction in the development of the reading habit in the classroom. This educator believed the home reading environment results might not have been as positive if the practicum had not included a parent-involvement component.

The results of the pre and posttest of the reading attitude/behavior survey were in agreement with this educator's analysis of the direct observations and the children's interview responses.

All three assessment tools supported a positive trend in the children's attitudes/behaviors toward reading. The standard of performance for the second objective stated that 80% of the children would maintain or improve their attitudes/behaviors toward reading. The second objective was met.

Objective 3. The third objective dealt with parent involvement. As participants in the practicum, the parents would support the SQUIRT program, provide a good home reading environment, and assist in the evaluation of the children's reading attitudes and their acquisition of the reading habit. It was expected that 80% of the parents participating would express positive responses.

Through oral and written communications, this educator involved the parents in every phase of the practicum. As early as November, the parents were introduced to the concept of SQUIRT and the importance of helping children develop good reading attitudes and acquire the reading habit through modeling and providing a literate home environment. Verbal commitment was easy. Since there was 100% attendance at the November parent-teacher conferences, 100% of the parents were initially involved in the practicum. Every parent expressed positive feelings toward a program that might help the children improve reading attitudes and develop the reading habit.

Involvement in the actual SQUIRT program began Preparation Week.

When the parents were asked to help stock the SQUIRT classroom library, every parent/child contributed. This educator was pleased to note the variety and quality of books and magazines the children brought to school. When the parents were invited to join a SQUIRT session, nine non-working parents visited the classroom and read with us. The parents who came to the SQUIRT sessions were impressed with the children's performance. The comments were positive. When the parents were invited to provide a reading at home (RAH) program, 17 families initiated some type of a home reading program.

Although this educator was able, through direct observations and parent-teacher interactions, to get some feedback from the parents during the practicum in assessing the children's reading attitudes and reading behaviors, the Parent Free Response Interview (Appendix E) provided an excellent means to report the findings. By sending the interview surveys home prior to the parent-teacher conference, the parents had the opportunity to come prepared.

This educator was pleased to report that every parent assisted in the evaluation and every parent responded in a positive manner. Of course, there were varying degrees of positivism as noted by the following statements when the parents were queried about the benefits of SQUIRT:

Reading is now an "acceptable" activity for him.

His attitude about reading has definitely changed.

She is tackling long, many-chapter "classics."

A book is a must wherever she goes.

She is making more attempts at reading things she encounters in real life.

It is beneficial to enable the children to observe their peer group enjoying reading.

I think the program is great.

He enjoys reading everything in sight.

Independent skills are so necessary for the higher grades.

He knows he is capable of handling harder material.

She is reading more often and is very proud of her improved ability to read.

Her love for reading is much enhanced.

Reading newspapers and magazines is a new development.

Since reading is not Jamey's favorite thing, he is more willing to read because he can read something that interests him.

Andy's been influenced by a brother who does not like to read into thinking reading is something to be disliked. By observing his peers reading, he is more willing to read.

Jennifer enjoys reading so much. She read 30 books in April.

Ericka thinks it's a neat important thing.

This educator found the mention of peer influence by some of the parents worthy of comment. Just as this educator's observation revealed peer imitation coming into play, so, too, some parents made like observations. Just as this educator influenced parents to nurture the reading habit, peers influenced peers to catch the reading habit. Alexander and Filler (1976) reported the value of peer influence in sustained silent reading programs.

When assessing the parent's response on the questions asked on the survey concerning the SQUIRT program, this educator determined the

following general findings:

1. The children talked about SQUIRT at home. There was a high incidence of children reporting: a) the rules; b) the number of minutes read each day (or to date); c) the book or magazine being read; and d) the guests who came to read.
2. The parents believed there was an improved attitude toward reading because the children: a) wanted to read at home; b) accepted reading as a worthwhile home activity; c) thought SQUIRT was a neat important activity; d) showed confidence about reading; and e) shared readings.
3. The children were reading more on their own. There were evidences of: a) curling up with a book; b) reading some of the time instead of always watching television; c) taking a book when going away from home; d) looking for new and different things to read; and e) borrowing more books from the library.
4. The parents believed SQUIRT was beneficial because the program: a) took a skill and turned it into fun; b) developed a real interest in reading; c) gave a choice of reading matter; d) helped to show children that reading could be interesting and fun; e) encouraged reading at home; and f) developed self-confidence.

In analyzing these findings, this educator was made aware of the influence of the home-school partnership and the importance of informed

knowledgeable parents. In November, the parents were asking why the children were not reading. In May, the parents were telling why the children were reading. The parents were convinced of the program's value. And, this educator was convinced that parent education of and parent involvement encouraged the parents to work for change in themselves as well as the children.

In order for a more complete evaluation of the children's reading attitudes and reading behaviors, this educator needed to assess the home reading environment. Since the RAH (Reading At Home) program was a voluntary non-monitored program, this educator noted the following results:

1. Some form of home reading program was carried out in 17 of the 20 homes.
2. The majority of the participating families instituted a week-end program.
3. The participating families planned to continue some form of home reading.
4. Many parents stated the home reading program helped unite the family unit. It was something the family could do together.
5. Most parents considered themselves a good reading model.
6. More mothers than fathers participated full time.

The parents were open and candid when responding to the queries concerning the home reading program. As stated earlier, there were varying forms of family home reading programs reported. The parents

cited the following problem factors in trying to institute a daily session of family members reading together: 1) scheduling time; 2) conflicting activities; 3) the non-reading sibling (baby); and 4) a reluctant sibling or parent. Some parents reported of days when it was impossible to get all the family members together at the same time to read. However, the parents reported the home reading session was conducted without the absent member. Of the three families that did not participate in RAH, two parents cited "too busy," and the other parent said, "my son and daughter have their own RAH program." This educator had decided, for evaluaton purposes, the valid family home reading program would have at least one adult member of the family participating; therefore, for reporting purposes, 85% of the homes instituted RAH.

This educator considered the family home reading program a successful component of the practicum. With both parents and children responding to queries concerning this portion of the practicum, one group corroborated the other group's findings. As formerly reported by Lengyl (1980), and verified by this educator, a combination family home reading program and classroom sustained silent reading program complemented each other. This educator believed the home reading component was a powerful motivator in keeping the children reading. By providing a literate home reading environment, the parents modeled at home what this educator modeled at school: reading is a valued lifetime activity.

The results of the parents' free response interview were

gratifying. Of the 20 parents (100%) participating in the evaluation, all parents expressed positive feelings toward the SQUIRT program. The standard of performance for the third objective stated that 80% of the parents participating would express positive responses. The third objective was met.

B. Conclusions.

The collected data supported a relationship between sustained silent reading and the development of the reading habit. A summary of the results of the practicum indicated all the objectives were successfully attained. By establishing reading practice in the form of a daily timed sustained silent reading session (SQUIRT), the chidren became independent, self-sufficient, and self-sustaining readers. The children increased their staying power with print and exhibited positive reading attitudes and positive reading behaviors while engaging in the SQUIRT sessions. These positive attitudes and behaviors toward reading spilled over into related activities which became serendipity for the children and this educator. By involving the parents, a good home-school partnership fostering positive reading attitudes and developing the reading habit was established.

The practicum was the answer to this educat[illegible] problem: insufficient sustained silent reading time as a means of fostering a positive attitude and developing the habit of reading independently for knowledge and pleasure. SQUIRT put silent reading in the classroom (Mork, 1972). SQUIRT became the "missing link between skill exercises and fluency" (Allington, 1971). SQUIRT provided the necessary practice

(McCracken, 1972). SQUIRT produced "efficient, effective, and more versatile readers" (Botel, 1981). And, most of all, SQUIRT encouraged the children to read, read, and read.

SSR should be an integral part of any reading-communication arts curriculum. Collins asked the question: "Can SSR be an effective instructional tool for students below grade four?" (1980, p.114). SSR was found to be an effective instructional tool in this educator's second grade classroom. In fact, SSR was "pure gold!" (Martin, 1982).

C. Recommendations for Replicating the Program

A sustained silent reading program, as a component of the total reading-language arts curriculum, would be flexible and responsive to the uniqueness of any particular situation. A person wishing to implement an SSR program should:

1. become familiar with the literature
2. obtain the support of the administration, librarian, and parents
3. lay the groundwork
4. provide motivational strategies
5. seek the children's commitment
6. follow the guidelines
7. be a good reading model
8. encourage related activities
9. keep supportive persons informed and involved.

Although a home reading component would not be a necessary component of an SSR program, this educator would recommend its inclusion.

D. Dissemination

The workings and results of the practicum were presented to the second-grade faculty of the Schuylkill Valley School District at an in-service meeting in October, 1983. It was decided to implement a similar SSR program in all the second grades in the district beginning March, 1984.

The practicum report will be shared with the faculty and administration of this educator's school district. The practicum report will be presented to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The practicum and its ramifications will be included in the format (where applicable) of this educator's professional activities; namely, speaking engagements, workshops, writings, and courses taught.

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Appendix A

Interest Inventory (September)

Name_____ Date_____

1. Who are the people in your family?_____
2. Do your parents ever read to you?_____ When?_____
3. Do you ever read to your parents?_____ When?_____
4. Did you read on your own this summer?_____ A lot?____ Sometimes?____
5. Do you have any books of your own at home?_____ What kinds?_____
6. Do you get any magazines at home?_____ Which ones?_____
7. Do you have a set of encyclopedias at home?_____
8. Do you ever go to the public library?_____
9. Do you have a favorite book?_____ What is it?_____
10. What is your favorite color?_____
11. What is your favorite food?_____
12. What is your favorite animal?_____
13. What is your favorite television program?_____
14. Where is your favorite place to be?_____
15. What is your favorite thing to do?_____
16. What do you wish for?_____
17. What do you think you would like to be when you grow up?_____
    Why?_____
18. What do you like to do after school and on weekends?_____
    _____
19. Do you collect anything?_____ What?_____
20. If you could have any toy you wanted, what would it be?_____
21. If you could have your choice of game to play, what game would you play?_____ Why?_____
22. What hobbies or interests do you have?_____
23. What do you like most about school?_____
24. Do you have a best friend?_____ Who?_____

Appendix B

Student Free Response Interview (first week in September; first week in January)

Name_____

Date_____

Let's Talk About Reading

1. Why do people read? Why do you read?

2. When do you read?

3. What do you do when you read?

4. Do you think you are a good reader? How do you know?

5. If answer to #4 is no, ask: How do you know you are a poor reader?

6. Do you think reading is fun?

Appendix C
Reading Attitude Scale (March and June)

Attitudes Toward Reading

Pennsylvania Right to Read Program

Please make sure that everyone has an answer sheet and a pencil. Tell the children that this is a survey to find out how they feel about books and reading. There are no right or wrong answers. They are to answer the way they feel. They should use their pencil to circle the answer they choose.

Please read each sentence twice and leave time for them to answer. The first seven items are questions. Read the first question, which is an example. Instruct them to circle "never" if they never jump rope, "sometimes" if they jump rope once in awhile, and "a lot" if they do it quite often.

1. How often do you jump rope?

   never sometimes a lot

2. How much do you read at home?

   none a little a lot

3. How often do you go to the library?

   never sometimes a lot

4. How many library books do you get from the library each week?

   none a few many

5. How many books of your own do you have at school?

   none a few many

6. How much do your parents read?

   none a little a lot

7. When you were younger, how often did your parents read to you?

   never sometimes a lot

Primary Form

Appendix C

For the remaining items, the students will have to listen to the sentence and decide if they don't really feel that way, feel that way a little, or feel that way a lot. (The choices are "not really," "a little," and "a lot.") Read number 8. Instruct them to circle "a lot" if they like ice cream a lot, "a little" if they like ice cream a little, and "not really" if they don't like ice cream. Read number 9. If they really do like cookies, they should circle "not really." If the children have no questions, please proceed.

8. I like ice cream.

   not really a little a lot

9. I hate cookies.

   not really a little a lot

10. I love reading.

11. I feel good after I've read a book.

12. I get tired of reading.

13. I would be happy to get a book for my birthday.

14. Reading school books is a waste of time.

15. Reading stories can be a lot of fun.

16. Playing is more fun than reading.

17. It is fun to read books.

18. I like to find books to read.

19. I hate to read.

20. I would rather plan than read.

21. I can learn things from reading books.

22. I think reading books is silly.

23. I want to be absent from reading class.

24. I want more time in school to read.

25. I get tired of reading stories.

26. It is good to know how to read.

27. I hate reading books in school.

28. I would rather read than work on other things.

29. Reading is the worst part of my day.

Appendix D

Student Free Response Interview (Culmination of Practicum)

Name_____
Date_____

1. Tell me what you think about SQUIRT.

2. Are you reading about many different things? Discuss.

3. Are you reading more at home than before SQUIRT? Do you and your family have RAH time? Discuss.

4. Are you taking more books out of the library? About how many a week?

5. Are you a better reader than before SQUIRT started? Discuss.

6. In school, do you want more time to read? want SQUIRT the same way? want SQUIRT but not everyday? want to stop SQUIRT? Why?

7. Do you think you will read on your own this summer?

8. Do you have a favorite book? Tell me about it.

Appendix E

Parent Interview (Parent-Teacher Conference)

Name_____

Date_____

SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time)
A Classroom Sustained Silent Reading Program

1. Does you child talk with you about SQUIRT? Discuss.

2. Do you think your child's attitude toward reading has improved as a result of our classroom's silent reading program? Discuss.

3. Do you think your child is reading more on his own because of the program? Discuss.

4. What is your assessment of our classroom silent reading program? Do you think it is essential? In what ways?

* *

RAH (Reading at Home) A Family Sustained Silent Reading Program

1. Do you and your family participate in RAH? Discuss.

2. How often do you read together?___daily ___weekends ___weekly
Other:

3. Do you plan to continue the reading at home program on a regular basis? Discuss.

4. What is your assessment of the reading at home program? Do you think it is beneficial? In what ways? Were there problems? What?

5. Do you consider yourself a good reading model for your child? Discuss.

Appendix F

A List of Criteria for Modeling

	Yes	No
1. In the last week I have spent over three hours reading a book.		
2. In the last two months I have bought or borrowed at least two books for pure pleasure.		
3. I have right now a pure pleasure book within arm's reach of my: (need 3 out of 5) a. bed b. easy chair c. eating place d. toilet e. desk		
4. I have brought up in non-academic conversation in the past three days something I read for pleasure.		
5. I have discussed a book with a person I love in the last week.		
6. I have spent at least four hours during one of the last two weekends reading a book for pleasure.		
7. Sometime during the last three months, while shopping, I have spontaneously bought a book.		
8. When I suspect I'm going to be kept waiting at appointments or when I'm going to be traveling, I take a book along.		
9. I read when I'm sitting with other people, not just when I'm alone or ready for bed.		
10. I can vividly describe to you right now five books I've read in the last two years I'd want a friend to read.		

Dr. Marion Rosecky
Director of Project CARES
(Communication Arts Resources
and Educational Services)
Pennsylvania Department of Education

SHIRT
DB

Appendix H

March 9, 1984

Dear Parents,

SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time), the classroom sustained reading program we talked about at our last parent-teacher conference is about to begin. This is SQUIRT promotion week. A large banner, "SQUIRT is Coming!" greeted your child upon entering the classroom this morning. A bulletin board with our SQUIRT logo and "Our principal thinks SQUIRT is great! He's coming to join us" is the first of daily clues to help the children solve the mystery of SQUIRT! Please don't tell. After five days of guesstimates, the SQUIRT program will be explained and discussed.

March 14, 1983, will begin preparation week with a banner, "SQUIRT is Near!" The children and I will be busy planning and assembling a classroom library collection. Your child will be writing you a letter asking for your help. We hope you will be willing to share some of your child's books and magazines for our SQUIRT library. Our school librarian is helping us.

With the rules of SQUIRT firmly established and a well-stocked classroom collection of books and magazines, the banner, "SQUIRT is Here!" will greet your child on Monday, March 21, 1983. On that day, the first SQUIRT period will be held. Everyone in the classroom will read, including me. Hopefully, it will be the first of many enjoyable reading-for-fun (and knowledge and practice) days of SQUIRT in our classroom.

Very truly yours,

Doris Burkhart
Second Grade Teacher

Appendix I

March 18, 1983

Dear Parents,

On Monday, March 21, 1983, our SQUIRT (Super Quiet Uninterrupted Independent Reading Time) will begin. After ten days of anticipating, planning, and preparing for SQUIRT, the children are excited to begin their daily sustained silent reading sessions. The SQUIRT classroom library is stocked. The SQUIRT rules are posted. The SQUIRT signup chart has the signature of every child and myself. A SQUIRT graph, to chart the number of minutes we sustain ourselves each day, is hung in our classroom. And, each of us has a book or magazine with a SQUIRT bookmark ready and waiting.

The children know they may choose their own reading material. The children know they may share something they are reading if they wish to do so. And, the children know they must read silently for a prescribed number of minutes.

Hopefully, SQUIRT will be a rewarding experience for your child. It should not be surprising that having children read on their own is not only a major objective in reading, but also a method of becoming a more effective, efficient, and versatile reader. There is no better form of practice and drill in reading. It is also a way of encouraging a lifetime commitment to reading as a means to knowledge and entertainment.

Perhaps, you may wish to join us for a SQUIRT session. There is one stipulation. You must read! Call us or write a note. We'll sign you up for SQUIRT with the second grade.

Very truly yours,

Doris Burkhart
Second Grade Teacher

Appendix J

March 25, 1983

Dear Parents,

Is your child telling you about our SQUIRT sessions? Did you know our principal, Mr. Wallace, joined us for one of our SQUIRT sessions? Of course, he sat down and read with us.

Would you like to begin a sustained silent reading program at home? I invite you to take part in the RAH (Reading at Home) program. I am asking parents to select a short time each evening, turn off the television, and engage in family sustained silent reading.

If not daily, you may wish to institute a week-end program. A week-end of family sustained silent reading and Monday through Friday SQUIRT sessions at school would give your child the opportunity to read something on his/her own every day.

The rules are simple. Everyone reads silently from something of one's own choice for a pre-established number of minutes. A kitchen timer, where no one can see it but everyone can hear it when the time is up, is an excellent way to control the length of the session. The amount of time will be up to you. We started with five minutes. The program is voluntary. There will be no school monitoring. RAH is between you and your child. Through this attempt, the school and home can assist each other with helping your child develop the reading habit.

Should you decide to participate in some form of RAH, ask your child to help you with the planning. Your child knows all about individual sustained silent reading. May you find RAH a beautiful family experience.

Very truly yours,

Doris Burkhart
Second Grade Teacher

Appendix K

May 9, 1983

Dear Parents,

Our sustained silent reading program (SQUIRT) is a tremendous success. The children are really enjoying our SQUIRT sessions. They are reading materials of their own choosing each day. I am most pleased with the selections chosen. The children are now reading silently fifteen minutes per day. Their goal is twenty minutes. They are working hard to reach that goal. It is gratifying to note the interest the children are displaying as they read and participate in related literature experiences.

In a few weeks, I will be evaluating the SQUIRT program. The children will be given a reading attitude survey. They will be participating in an interview regarding the silent reading program. I am also asking you to participate in the evaluation. Please take a moment to complete the accompanying survey. Your input will help me make a more complete evaluation of the benefits of our sustained silent reading program.

Upon completion of the evaluation, including your interview with me, your child will receive the "SQUIRT AWARD." Please remember to bring the survey so your child is assured the award. Thank you for your consideration of my request. I'm looking forward to our conference.

Very truly yours,

Doris Burkhart
Second Grade Teacher

Enclosure

Appendix L

June 13, 1983

Dear Parents,

The evaluations of our SQUIRT program are completed. According to the student and parent interviews, SQUIRT is "pure gold!" Thank you for your cooperation and involvement. To those of you who have participated in RAH, may I offer you my congratuations. It was gratifying to know that most of you are finding ways to put a little "reading together time," into your busy schedules.

Tomorrow, the children will participate in their last SQUIRT session in second grade. Now that your child has discovered the joy of reading and has acquired the reading habit, why not continue with a summer reading program? You can help your child improve or continue to grow in reading skills. It is a well-known fact that children read better and read more if they come from a home where an active interest in reading is evident and reading material is plentiful.

May I offer you the following suggestions for providing your child with a rich reading environment:

- Be a reading model by letting your child see you reading books.
- Take your child to the library/bookmobile and a bookstore where you can select good books together.
- Read to your child. Listen to your child read. Read with your child.
- be interested in what your child is reading.
- Develop a comfortable and relaxing at-home reading place.
- Make reading materials readily accessible.
- Display short and simple reading items in obvious places.
- Have reading materials handy for unexpected idle moments away from home such as waiting in the doctor's office, in the car, etc.

Accompanying this letter are three offerings that will help you provide a rich reading atmosphere in your home: 1) a pamphlet from the public library listing summer hours, summer programs, and the bookmobile schedule; 2) a flyer giving information of a PBS summer television series, "Reading Rainbow," featuring award winning children's picture books with related activities; and 3) a listing of children's books your child might wish to receive as a gift or might want to borrow from the library.

It has been a pleasure working with your child. My best wishes go with your child to third grade. May you have a beautiful summer. Happy Reading!

Very truly yours,

Doris Burkhart
Second Grade Teacher

Enclosures: 3